SAGAS OF THE SEA, SHIPS, PLUNDER AND...

PIRACY

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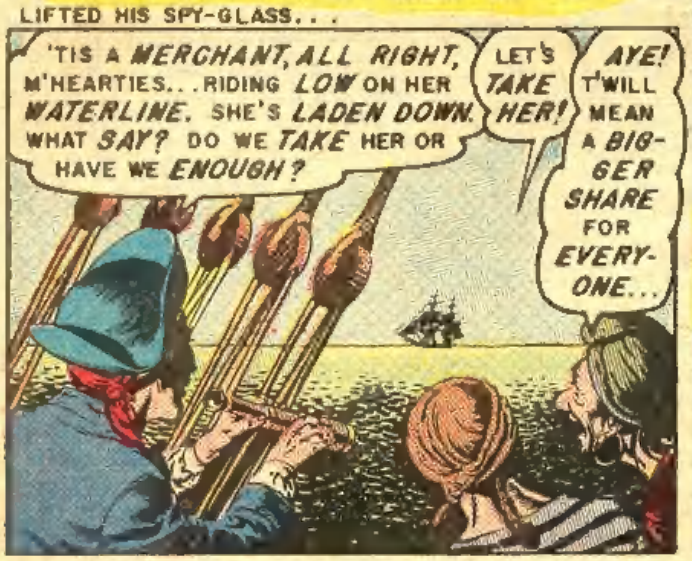
*Scan by Fett **HaCsA!!*

SEA FOOD

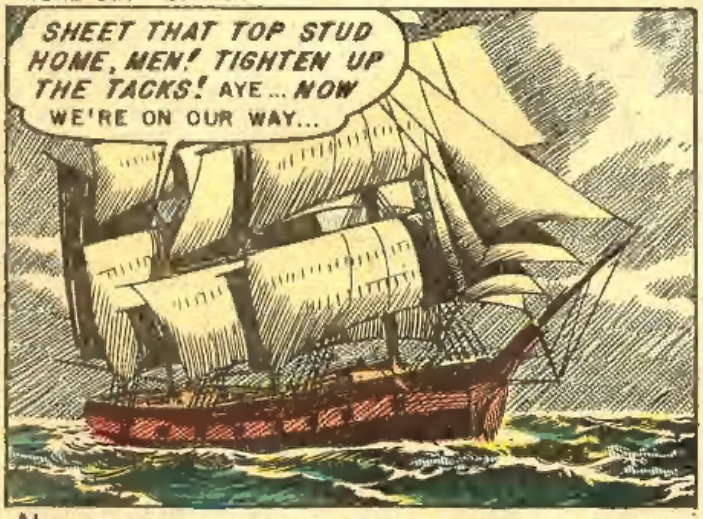
THEY WERE PIRATES AND THEY'D PROWLED THE TOSSING ATLANTIC FROM BARBADOS TO HATTARAS, EAGER TO PLY THEIR MURDEROUS, PLUNDERING PROFESSION TO WHATEVER UNFORTUNATE VESSEL MIGHT CROSS THEIR PATH. THEIR SHIP WAS A THREE-MASTED BARK, CAPTURED AND COMMANDEERED FOR THEIR OWN USE IN A BLOODY BATTLE SOME SEVEN MONTHS BEFORE. HER DECKS WERE LITTER-STREWN AND STAINED WITH LIQUOR AND BLOOD. HER PAINT WAS WEATHER-SCARRED AND PEELING, FOR THERE WAS NO POINT IN MAINTAINING HER. THERE WOULD BE OTHER SHIPS WHEN SHE'D OUTLIVED HER USEFULNESS. HER HOLD WAS FILLED WITH GOLD AND SILKS AND JEWELS AND A MYRIAD OF ASSORTED BOOTY. HER RIGGING ECHOED WITH THE LUSTY LAUGHTER AND CURSES AND SINGING OF HER BLOODTHIRSTY CREW. SHE WAS HEADED TOWARD NEW PROVIDENCE, THE PIRATE STRONGHOLD IN THE BAHAMAS, HER PIRATE CAPTAIN BESIDE HER HELM, SURVEYING HIS OCEAN-GOING REBEL DOMAIN... HIS CELEBRATING CUT-THROAT BAND. IN NEW PROVIDENCE, THEIR BOOTY WOULD BE SOLD, THE PROCEEDS DIVIDED, AND AFTER THE CREW HAD SPENT THEIR SHARES IN WINE AND WOMEN AND REVELRY, THEY WOULD BE OFF AGAIN ON ANOTHER PROWLING EXPEDITION. BUT NOW A CRY CAME FROM MASTHEAD...

THE SINGING AND LAUGHTER DIED AND ALL EYES TURNED TOWARD THE TWO-MASTED BRIG ON THE DISTANT HORIZON. CAPTAIN BENJAMIN MEDFORD LIFTED HIS SPY-GLASS...



THE PIRATE CAPTAIN HESITATED, THEN SMILED AND SHOUTED...

THE EAGER PIRATE CREW LEAPED INTO THE RIGGING AND SCURRIED ALOFT, UNHOUSING THE STUDDING SAIL BOOMS ON THE FORE AND MAIN MASTS. THE STOPS WERE HOISTED ALOFT TO THE YARDS AND SOON THEY WERE SET FLYIN'...

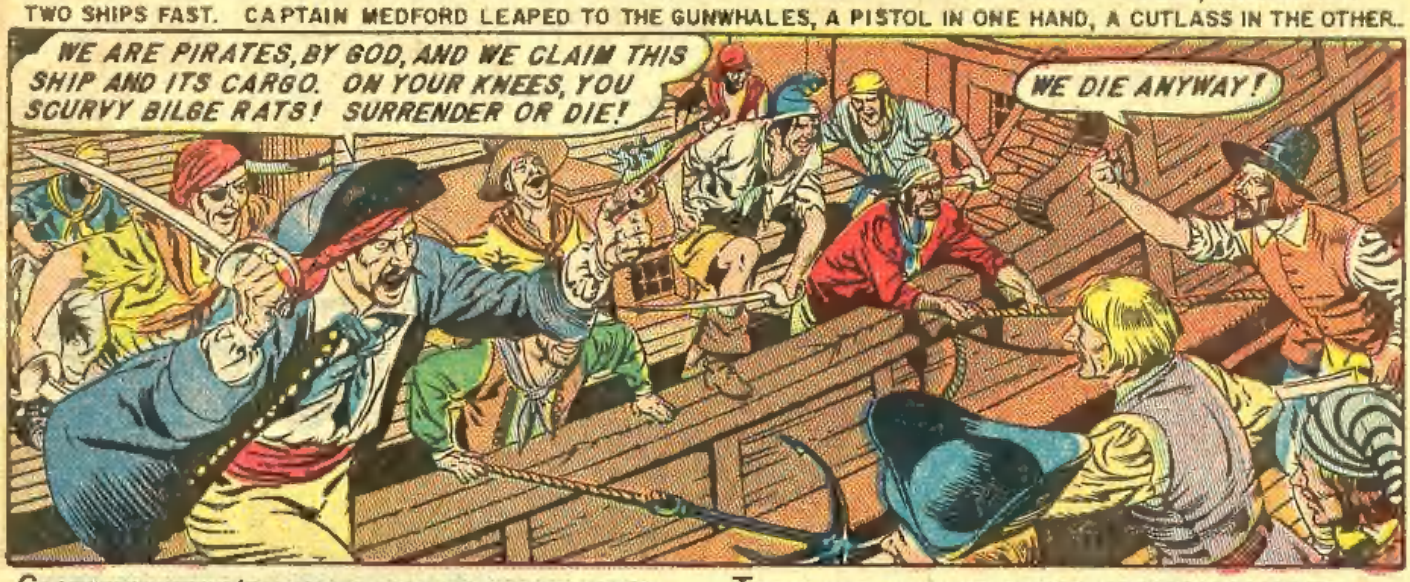


THE PIRATE BARK WITH THE EXTRA SAIL CATCHING THE WIND COMING FROM DEAD AFT, BORE DOWN UPON THE SMALLER BRIGANTINE...

NOW, TERRORIZED BY THE DREADED SKULL AND CROSS-BONE FLAG, THE MORE MANEUVERABLE DUTCH BRIG HOVE TO, ATTEMPTING TO AVOID AND OUTRUN THE FASTER AND LARGER BARK. THE PIRATE CAPTAIN STUDIED THE SYMMETRY AND BALANCE AND GRACE OF THE VESSEL...

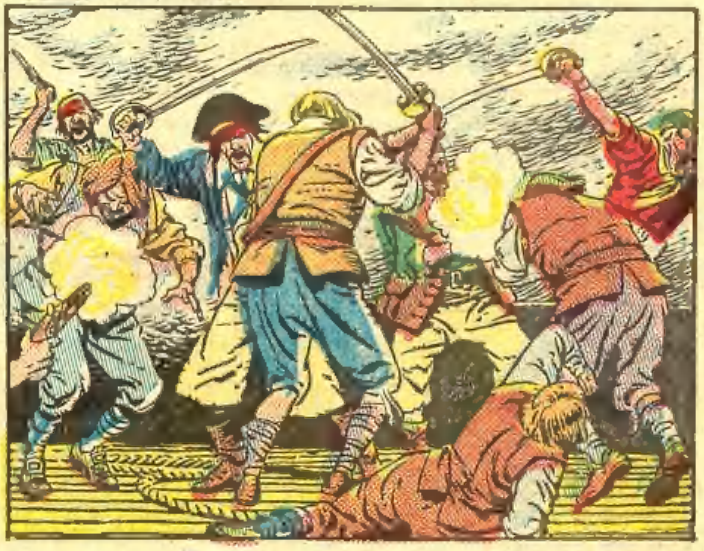
IT WAS A FOOLISH MANEUVER FOR THE DOOMED DUTCH MERCHANT. THE SAILS SPILLED THEIR WIND AND SHE FLOUNDERED MOMENTARILY, GIVING THE PIRATE BARK TIME TO PULL ALONGSIDE...

NOW TIMBER GROANED AGAINST TIMBER AND MASTS SHOOK AND STAYS SHUDDERED AS THE TWO VESSELS RAMMED TOGETHER. GRAPPLING HOOKS WERE FLUNG FROM THE PIRATE SHIP TO THE MERCHANT'S DECK, HOLDING THE TWO SHIPS FAST. CAPTAIN MEDFORD LEAPED TO THE GUNWHALES, A PISTOL IN ONE HAND, A CUTLASS IN THE OTHER.

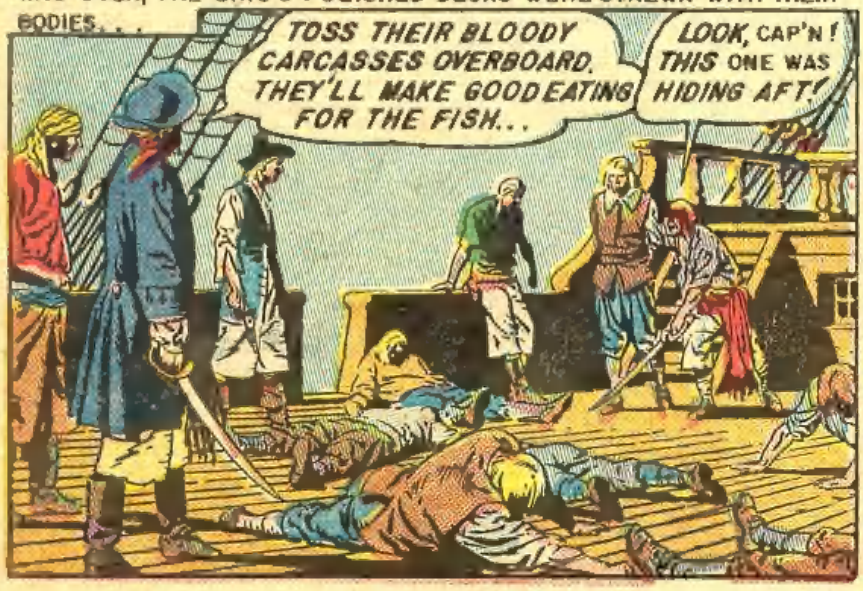


CAPTAIN MEDFORD'S ANSWER CAME AS A DIRK WHINED PAST HIS ARM AND BURIED ITSELF IN THE CHEST OF HIS SECOND IN COMMAND, GODFREY TEALE...

THE PIRATE CREW FOLLOWED THEIR LEADER AS HE LEAPED TO THE DECK OF THE DUTCH BRIG, SCREAMING CURSES AND PROFANITIES. THE VALIENT DUTCH CREW FOUGHT BRAVELY...



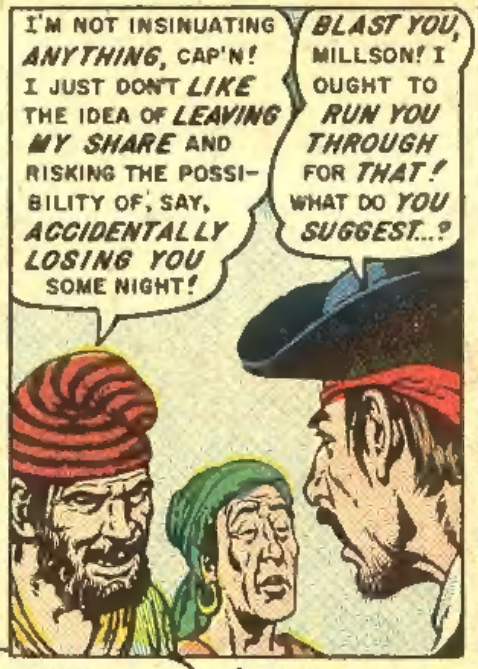
BUT THE ODDS WERE HOPELESSLY AGAINST THEM. WHEN THE BATTLE WAS OVER, THE BRIG'S POLISHED DECKS WERE STREWN WITH THEIR BODIES...

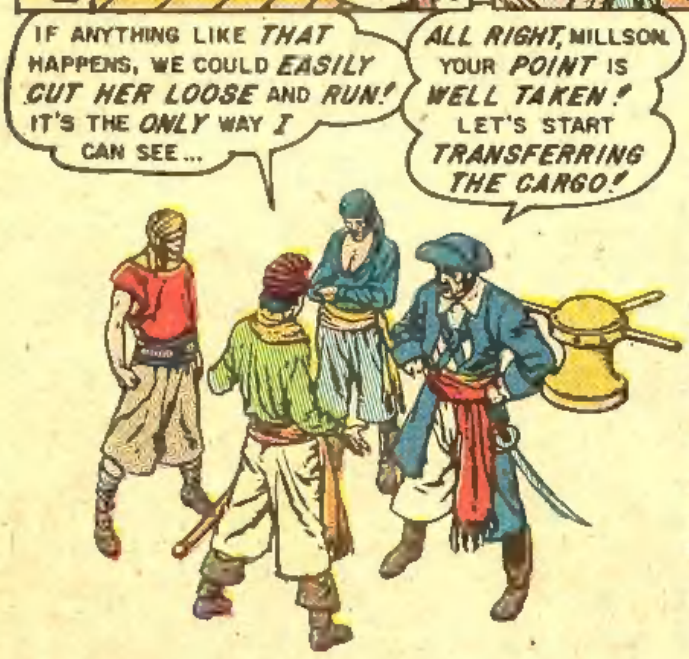


THE POOR UNFORTUNATE WHO'D MANAGED TO STAY ALIVE WAS FORCED TO WALK THE PLANK...

AND SO, NOT A SINGLE MEMBER OF THE MERCHANT SHIP'S CREW WAS LEFT ALIVE TO TELL OF THE HIDEOUS ATTACK. NOW THE PIRATE CAPTAIN BARKED AN ORDER...

AVERY MILLSON SWAGGERED ACROSS THE BLOODY-STAINED DECK AND STOOD BEFORE HIS PIRATE LEADER, HIS FACE GRIM...

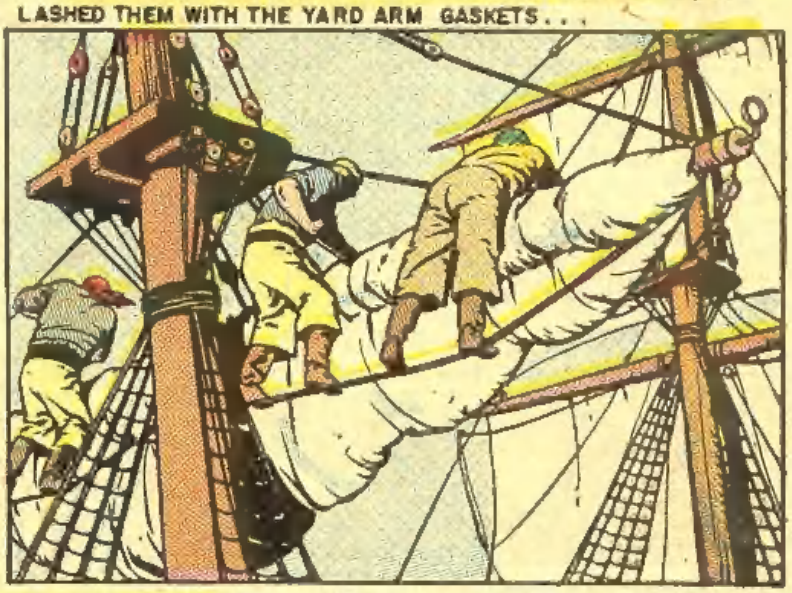




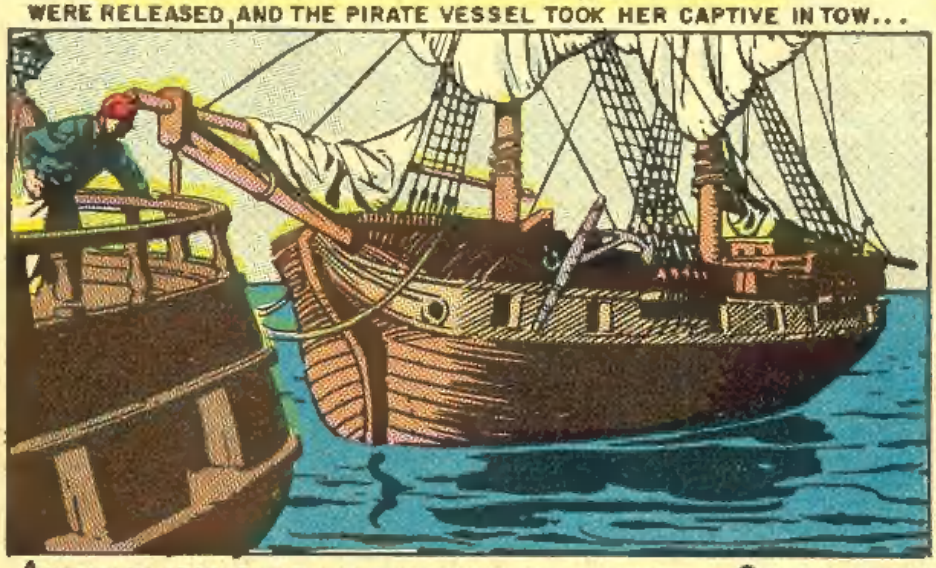
AND SO, THE PIRATE CREW LABORED BACK AND FORTH, STRIPPING THE DUTCH BRIGANTINE OF ITS CARGO AND CARRYING IT TO THEIR OWN BARK. EVERY LAST CASK AND BARREL WAS REMOVED...EVERYTHING OF VALUE...EVERYTHING EDIBLE...

WHEN THE MERCHANT WAS COMPLETELY STRIPPED, THE PIRATE CAPTAIN BELLOWED MORE ORDERS...

THE PIRATE CREW LEAPED INTO THE RIGGING, SPILLED THE WIND FROM THE BRIG'S SAILS, BUNDLED THEM INTO TIGHT FOLDS, AND LASHED THEM WITH THE YARD ARM GASKETS...

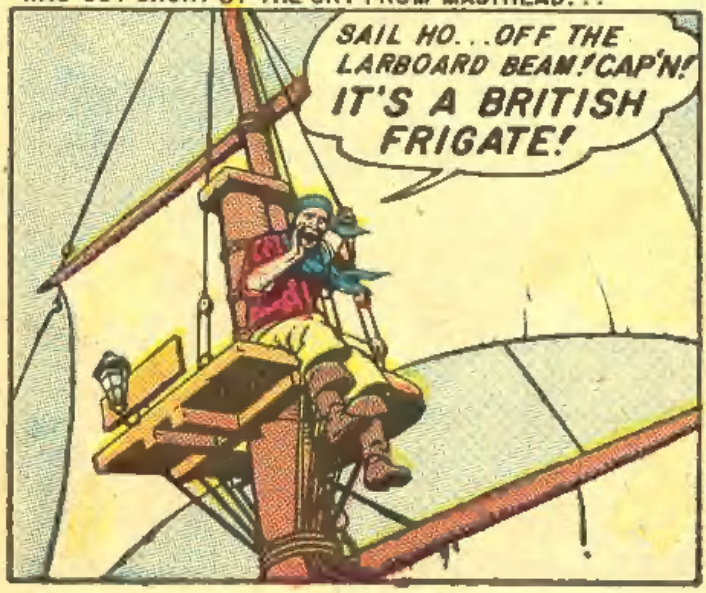


ITS SAILS TIGHTLY FURLED, ITS HOLDS AND DECKS AND LOCKERS STRIPPED CLEAN, THE DUTCH BRIGANTINE WAS NOW A BARREN HELPLESS HULK. A STOUT LINE WAS PASSED OVER ITS BOWSPRIT, THE GRAPPLING HOOKS WERE RELEASED, AND THE PIRATE VESSEL TOOK HER CAPTIVE IN TOW...

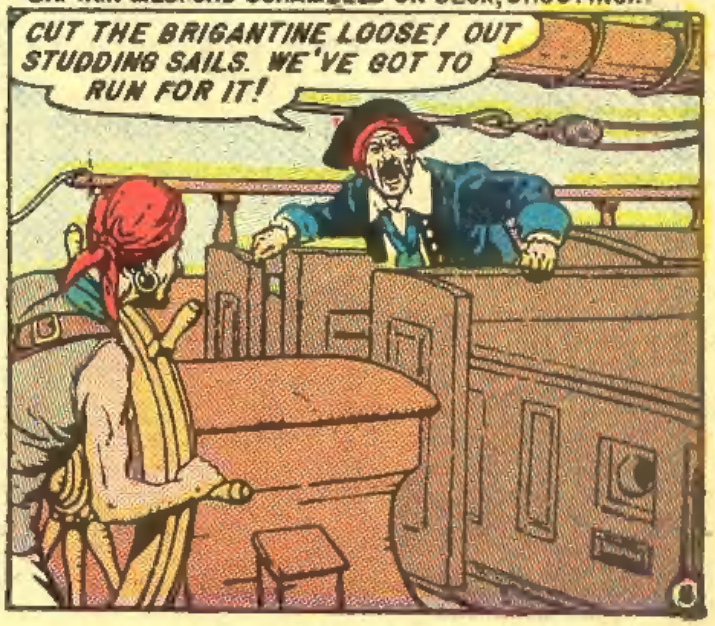


ONCE AGAIN, THE SINGING AND THE SHOUTING AND THE CURSING ECHOED ACROSS THE TOSSING SEA AS THE PIRATES AND THEIR PRIZE SAILED TOWARD THE BAHAMAS...

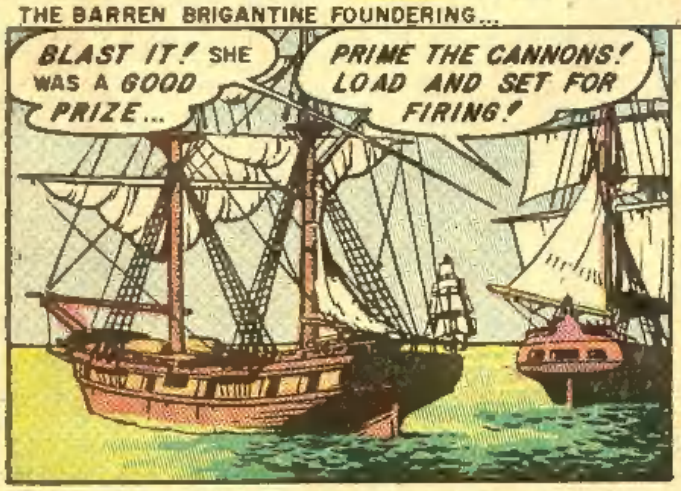
AND ONCE AGAIN, THE REVELRY AND THE CELEBRATING WAS CUT SHORT BY THE CRY FROM MASTHEAD...



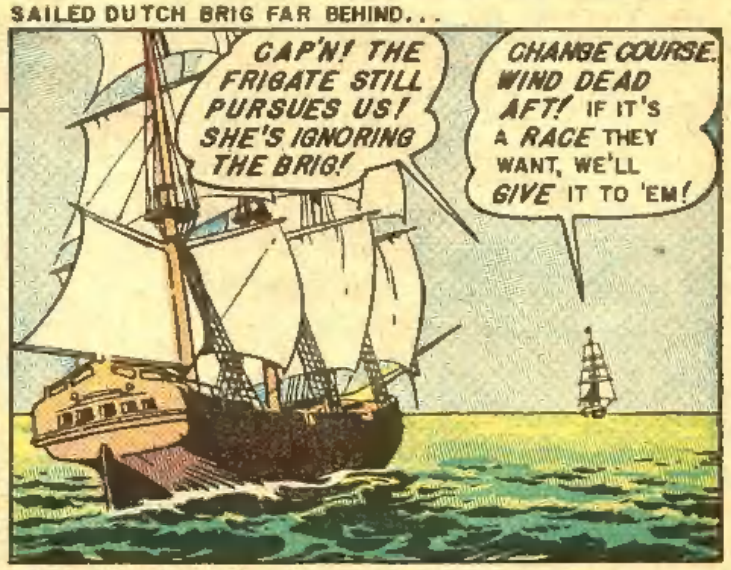
CAPTAIN MEDFORD SCRAMBLED ON DECK, SHOUTING...



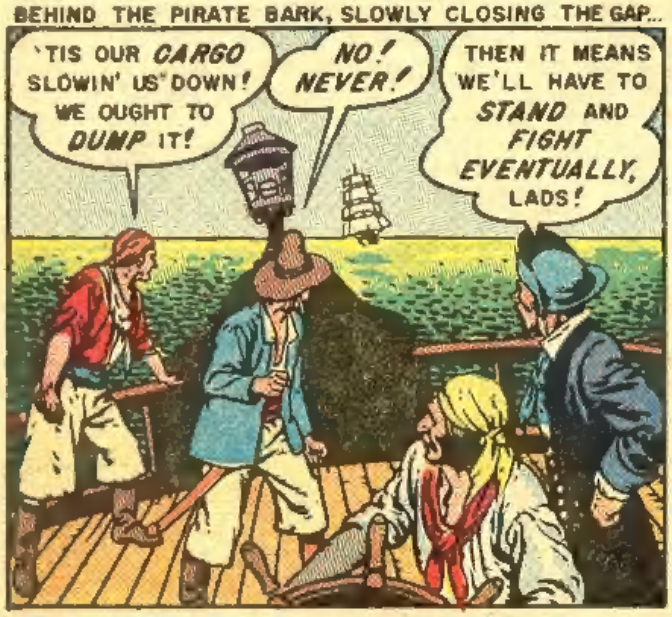
THE SIGHT OF THE ARMED BRITISH FRIGATE BEARING DOWN UPON THEM WAS LIKE A SPARK THAT IGNITED AN EXPLOSION OF PANIC AND CONFUSION AMONG THE PIRATES. THE TOWLINE WAS HACKED THROUGH AND THE BARK LEAPED AHEAD, LEAVING THE BARREN BRIGANTINE FOUNDERING...



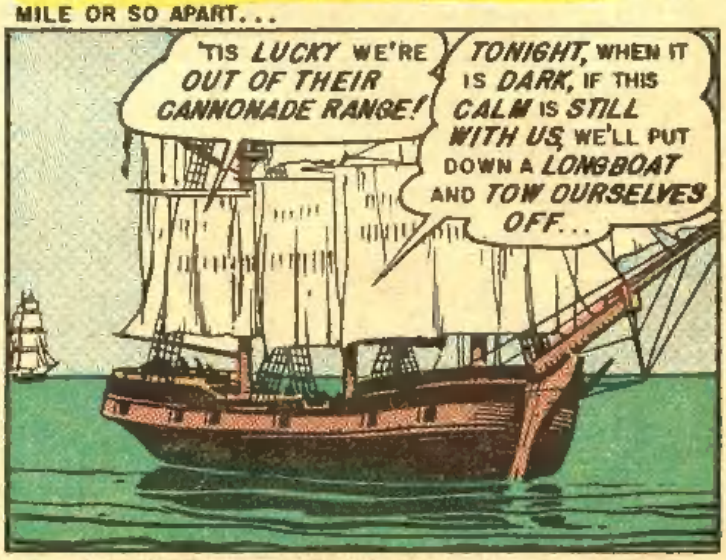
THE PIRATE BARK, ITS STUDDING SAILS FLYING, CUT KNIFE-LIKE THROUGH THE CHOPPY SEA, LEAVING THE FURLED-SAILED DUTCH BRIG FAR BEHIND...



BUT THE BRITISH FRIGATE PERSISTANTLY CLUNG BEHIND THE PIRATE BARK, SLOWLY CLOSING THE GAP...



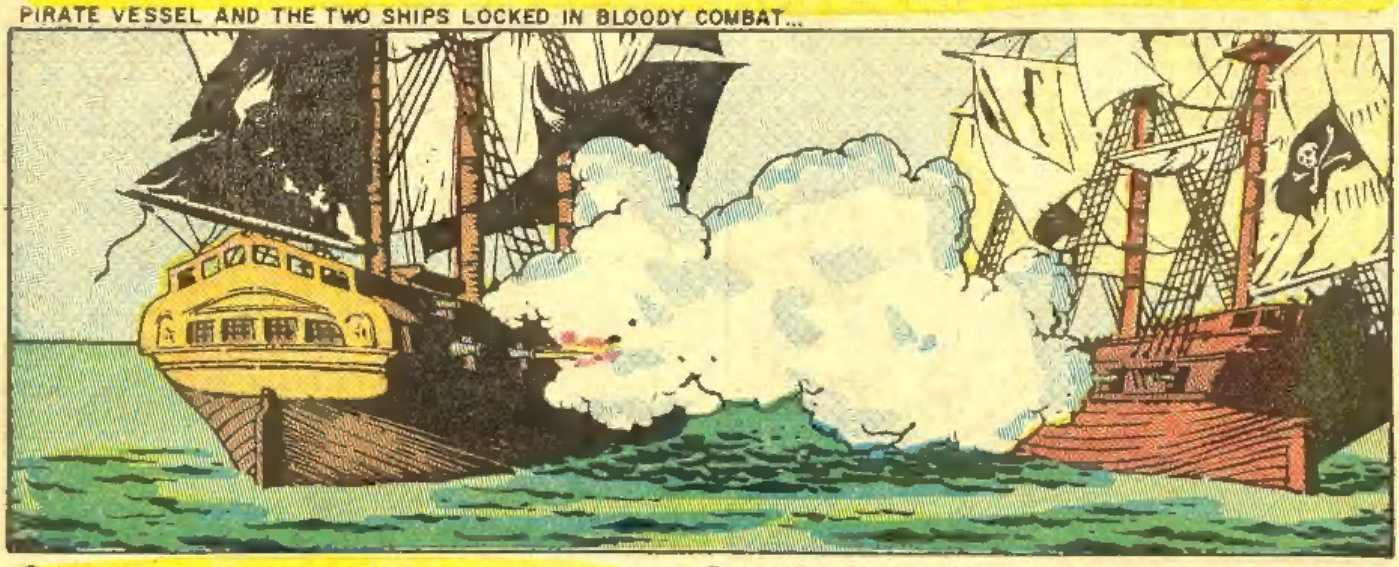
FOR THREE DAYS, THE FRIGATE CHASED CAPTAIN MEDFORD AND HIS PIRATE SHIP. AND THEN THE WIND DIED AND A CALM SET IN. THE SHIPS LAY MOTIONLESS, ONLY A MILE OR SO APART...



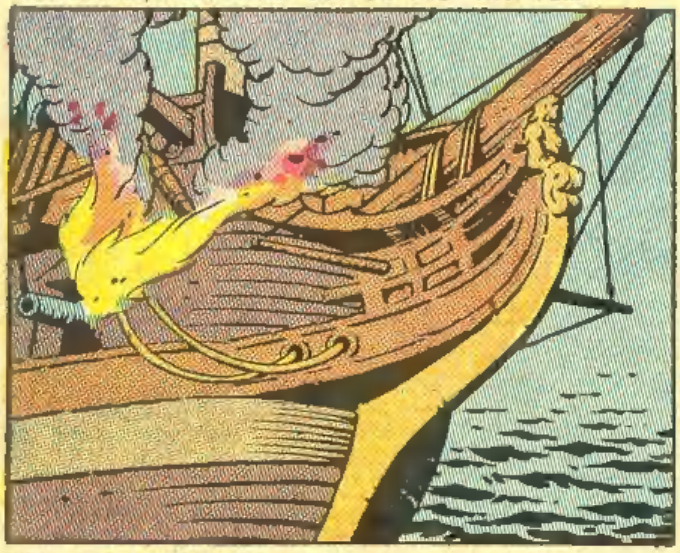
AND SO, THAT NIGHT, A LONGBOAT FULL OF BUCCANEERS WITH MUFFLED OARS TOWED A PIRATE BARK ACROSS A BLACK SEA...

...WHILE LESS THAN A MILE OFF, A LONGBOAT FULL OF BRITISH TARS, TUGGING AND STRAINING AT THEIR OWN MUFFLED OARS, TOWED THEIR FRIGATE AFTER THEM...

THE NEXT DAY, THE WIND PICKED UP AGAIN AND THE RUNNING AND PURSUING CONTINUED. IT WAS ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY AFTER THE CHASE HAD BEGUN THAT THE BRITISH FRIGATE FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH THE FLEEING PIRATE VESSEL AND THE TWO SHIPS LOCKED IN BLOODY COMBAT...

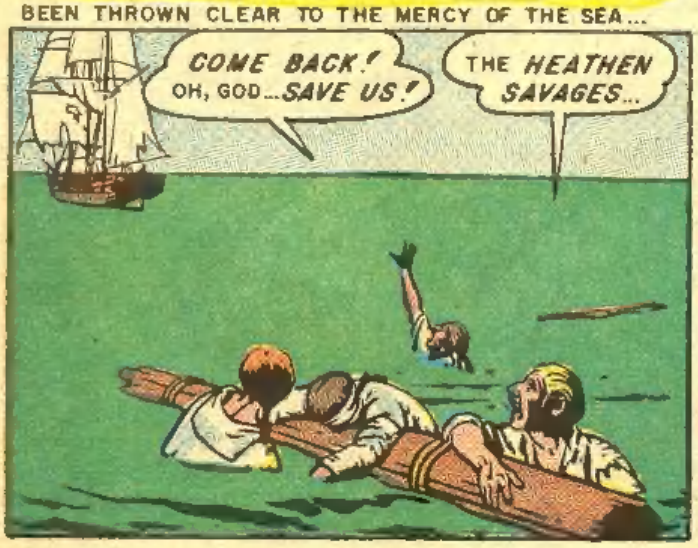


CANNONADE AFTER CANNONADE RIPPED AT EACH VESSEL, SPLINTERING MASTS, SHATTERING HULLS, RIPPING SAILS. AND AS THE TWO SHIPS DRIFTED TOGETHER, FIRE BROKE OUT ON THE FRIGATE...



SOMEHOW, THE FIRE REACHED THE BRITISH SHIP'S POWDER MAGAZINE, AND IT EXPLODED IN A BLINDING WHITE ROAR...

WITH THE FRIGATE SINKING AND ITS OWN HULL TAKING WATER, THE PIRATE VESSEL LIMPED AWAY, LEAVING THE SURVIVING BRITISH SAILORS THAT HAD BEEN THROWN CLEAR TO THE MERCY OF THE SEA...



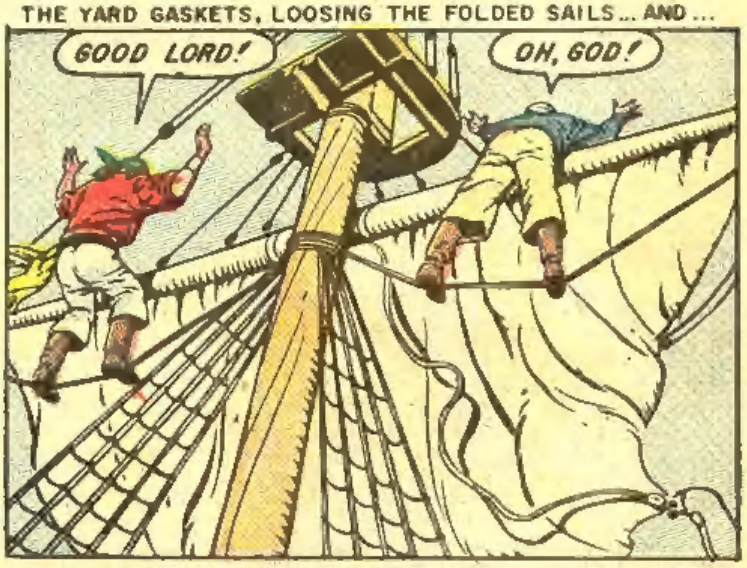
A FEW DAYS LATER, CAPTAIN MEDFORD, AFTER AN EXAMINATION OF HIS BARK'S DAMAGES, REPORTED TO HIS CREW...

IT WAS THE ABANDONED DUTCH BRIGANTINE. IT SAT MOTIONLESS ON THE WINDSWEPT SEA... A BARREN, STRIPPED HULK, BUT A HULK UNDAMAGED BY CANNON SHOT AND RAMMING... A GOOD SEAWORTHY VESSEL...

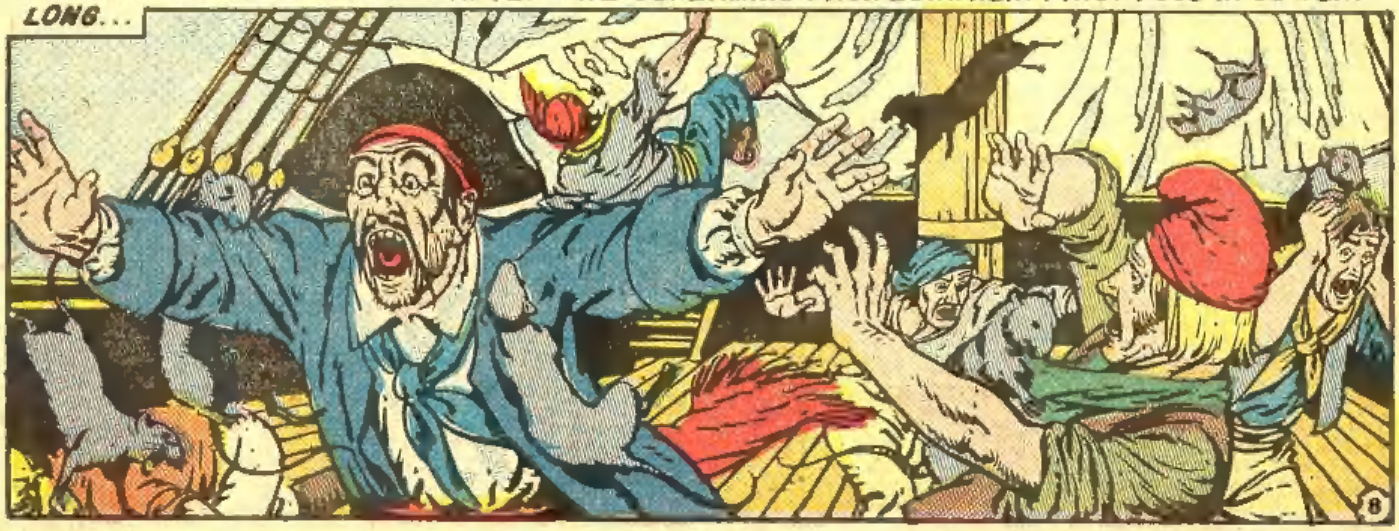
THE GLEEFUL PIRATES SPILLED ON BOARD THE TRIM BRIG THEY'D ABANDONED ALMOST THREE WEEKS BEFORE. NOW IT WAS THEIR SALVATION. SWIFTLY, THEY REMOVED THE BOOTY FROM THEIR OWN FOUNDERING BARK...

THE CRIPPLED PIRATE BARK WAS FIRED AND BLAZED UP BRIGHTLY, BURNING WILDLY. THEN THE PIRATE CAPTAIN BELLOWED...

THE CUT-THROATS LEAPED INTO THE RIGGING, UNTYING THE YARD GASKETS, LOOSING THE FOLDED SAILS... AND...



FOR OUT OF THE FURLED SAILS SPILLED *RATS...THOUSANDS OF STARVING RATS...* STARVING RATS THAT FOR *THREE WEEKS* HAD *SEARCHED* THE BARREN SHIP AND FOUND *EVERY CASK...* EVERY *CRACKER BARREL GONE...* STARVING RATS THAT HAD *CLIMBED* INTO THE FURLED SAILS TO *GNAW* AT THE *LATEEN* IN AN *ATTEMPT* TO *SATISFY* THEIR *HUNGER...* STARVING RATS THAT HAD *STRIPPED* THE SAILS TO *SHREDS* AND NOW *SNARLED* AND *SQUEALED* AND *BARED* THEIR KNIFE-LIKE *TEETH* IN *ANTICIPATION* AND SCRAMBLED OVER THE DECKS AND ALONG THE YARDS *AFTER THE SCREAMING PIRATES...THEIR FIRST FOOD IN SO VERY LONG...*



KISMET

THE AFRICAN NIGHT IS SOFT... THE FOOD IS GOOD... AND YOU SIT ENTHRONED, TRYING TO ENJOY IT ALL. YOU ARE BUCKO THOMAS, SLAVER... MUTINEER... MURDERER. AS YOU LOOK DOWN AT THE BARRACOONS, THE SLAVE PENS, YOU KNOW NOW HOW A KING MUST FEEL... MASTER OF ALL HE SURVEYS. BUT AMAH SPOILS IT FOR YOU. THE ARAB'S BEARDED, PARCHMENT-LIKE FACE IS LIFELESS... EMOTIONLESS. HIS CALM ■ THE COMPANY OF IMPENDING DEATH IRRITATES YOU...

THIS ISN'T LIKE THE *LAST* TIME, *EH*, AMAH? A FEW *DAYS* AGO, YOU DIDN'T *KNOW* THAT SOON YOU'D SHARE A MEAL WITH ME AGAIN, *DID* YOU? A... A *FINAL MEAL!*

ALLAH HAS SAID *ALL* THINGS *CHANGE*, MEESTER T'OMAS. A MAN CAN ONLY *ACCEPT* HIS FATE. IF *DOOM SEEKS HIM*, HE CANNOT *ESCAPE IT*... HE CANNOT *HIDE* FROM IT!

FATE! THESE ARABS! THEY'RE LIKE WOMEN... SOFT... WAITING FOR LIFE TO SPIN THEM A TUNE. BUT *YOU*, BUCKO THOMAS... THE BLOOD RUNS HOT IN *YOUR* VEINS. YOU DON'T *WAIT!* YOU *DO!* THAT'S WHY *YOU'RE* WHERE YOU *ARE* NOW...

A MAN CAN ONLY *ACCEPT* HIS FATE? *BAH!* A *REAL* MAN *MAKES* HIS *OWN FATE*, AMAH! I *TOLD* CAPTAIN AMES THAT *ONCE!* IF HE'D *LISTENED*, MAYBE HE'D *STILL* BE *ALIVE!*

MAYBE! YOU WAVE YOUR HAND AND A SLAVE GIRL HURRIES TO REFILL YOUR GLASS. THE WINE YOU'VE DRUNK IS WARM IN YOUR BELLY, AND THERE'S NO HARM IN TALKING NOW. AFTER ALL, THIS IS A BIG DAY IN YOUR LIFE, BUCKO THOMAS...

YOU... YOU *KILLED* HIM? CAPTAIN *AMES?* YOU *MURDERED...?*

HOW *ELSE* COULD I HAVE GOTTEN COMMAND OF THE UNICORN? I *WANTED* HER, SO I *TOOK* HER. AMES WAS A *FOOL!*

AMAH NODS. HE HOLDS NO GRUDGE. AMAH IS A TRUE SON OF ALLAH.. A BELIEVER IN KISMET... DESTINY! YOU REMEMBER BACK TO THAT DAY ABOARD THE UNICORN AS SHE BEAT CLOSE TO THE AFRICAN COAST... THAT DAY YOU SEARCHED HER FROM STEM TO STERN. YOU REMEMBER, AS YOU CAME ON DECK...

MISTER THOMAS! WHAT WERE YOU DOING BELOW? THIS IS YOUR WATCH! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON THE QUARTER DECK!

I WAS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING! AND YOU MIGHT AS WELL KNOW WHAT! IN TWO DAYS WE'LL BE AT THE RIO PONGO. THERE'S NO GOLD ABOARD. HOW DO WE BUY SLAVES WITHOUT GOLD?

WE'LL BUY OUR SLAVES, MISTER THOMAS! I'VE BEEN A SLAVER FOR TWENTY YEARS! DO YOU THINK I'D SAIL THREE THOUSAND MILES FOR NOTHING? WAIT AND SEE...

WAIT!? I HAVE WAITED! I'VE SAILED WITH YOU BEFORE, AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE HIDDEN THE GOLD...IF THERE IS ANY GOLD...

YOU REMEMBER CAPTAIN AMES'S FACE AND THE REALIZATION THAT YOU'D GONE TOO FAR...

I MEAN...CAPTAIN, I TRUST YOU, BUT THE MEN DON'T! THEY SIGNED ON FOR SHARES. NO SLAVES...NO SHARES OF PROFITS! I'M WORRIED...

...ABOUT FO'C'S'LE SCUM? LOOK, THOMAS. I'D AIMED TO RETIRE AND YOU TALKED ME INTO THIS LAST VOYAGE. IF YOU THINK I DON'T INTEND IT TO BRING A FAT PROFIT, YOU'RE DAFT!

SURE YOU'D TALKED AMES INTO THAT LAST VOYAGE... FOR REASONS OF YOUR OWN. LATER, IN THE FO'C'S'LE, YOU'D SPOKEN TO THE CREW.

IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE TELLIN' US, THOMAS? THAT THERE'S NO GOLD? ALL RIGHT THEN...WHY SHOULD WE WAIT? LET'S TAKE THE UNICORN NOW...

WE'LL TAKE THE UNICORN... JUST AS WE PLANNED! BUT WE'LL WAIT...

FOR WHAT? YOU AND YOUR PLANS! HE'S TRICKED US...NNNGGG!

NO MAN TRICKS BUCKO THOMAS! WE WAIT... UNTIL HE BRINGS HIS RABBIT OUT OF HIS HAT AND BUYS US A SHIPLOAD OF BLACK IVORY!

IT WASN'T FOR NOTHING THEY CALLED YOU 'BUCKO'. YOUR IRON FIST CRUNCHED FLESH AND BONE...AND THE CREW WAITED. THEY MUTTERED...THEY HATED...BUT THEY WAITED. TWO DAYS LATER, YOU WERE ON THE STINKING BOSOM OF THE PONGO

THERE'S THE BEND AHEAD. AMAH'S STOCKADE IS JUST BEYOND. YOU WILL GO ASHORE WITH ME; THOMAS...ONLY YOU. I DON'T TRUST THE OTHERS!

AYE, AYE, SIR. AND... THE GOLD? WE CAN'T BUY SLAVES FROM AMAH WITHOUT IT.

YOU REMEMBER HOW CAPTAIN AMES REACHED INTO HIS COAT AND PULLED OUT HIS TOBACCO POUCH...

GOLD? THERE IS NO GOLD, THOMAS. BUT THERE'S SOMETHING JUST AS GOOD. I CAN SHOW YOU, NOW. THIS TIME, WE DON'T PAY IN GOLD...

THEY LAY ON HIS PALM LIKE GLOBES OF FROZEN LIGHT. PEARLS ..THE SIZE OF PIGEON EGGS. YOU'D NEVER THOUGHT OF JEWELS...

I *BOUGHT* THESE [redacted] CUBA... FOR A *SONG!* MY *LAST* VOYAGE WILL BE A *MOST PROFITABLE* ONE! *NOW* DO YOU *UNDER-STAND*, THOMAS?

YES...YES, *NOW* I UNDERSTAND, SIR. *PEARLS* ARE EASY TO *CARRY!* YOU DIDN'T WANT TO RISK HAVING YOUR *THROAT SLIT* BY ONE OF THE *CREW!* VERY *CLEVER!*

LATER, WHILE AMAH WENT THROUGH THE RIGAMAROLE OF GREETING, YOU WERE LAUGHING INSIDE...

I GIVE YOU BREAD AND SALT, MY FRIENDS. MY HOUSE AND ALL THAT IT CONTAINS IS YOURS. WELCOME...

THANK YOU, OLD FRIEND. MAY THIS VISIT BRING BENEFIT TO US BOTH...

THEY WERE *BOTH* ACTING. *NEITHER* TRUSTED THE *OTHER*. YOU NOTED AMAH'S ARMED FOULAH GUARDS, AND YOU KNEW ABOUT THE BRACE OF PISTOLS BENEATH AMES'S COAT. AND YOU LAUGHED INSIDE BECAUSE YOU KNEW THAT IT WOULD BE *YOU* WHO WOULD BENEFIT. MEANWHILE YOU RELAXED

YOU NEVER *DREAMED*, THEN, THAT YOU'D BE *BACK* WITHIN A FEW DAYS. YOU WONDERED IDLY HOW IT WOULD BE TO *RULE* A LITTLE KINGDOM LIKE THIS. BUT WHAT YOU *WANTED* TO SEE WAS *SLAVES*. AND SOON, YOU DID...

GOOD ENOUGH. *THIS* ONE WILL BRING A *GOOD PRICE*. I'LL TAKE *HIM*... AND *THAT* ONE

GORAS, PUTOS, MANDINGOS... AMAH'S BARRACOONS WERE FULL AND THE CAPTAIN CHOSE THE BEST, PAYING FOR THEM WITH THE PEARLS. YOU LOADED QUICKLY AFTERWARD, BECAUSE NOW YOU WANTED TO GET AWAY...TO DO WHAT YOU'D PLANNED FOR SO LONG...

SO...YOU ARE ALMOST READY TO *SAIL*, CAPTAIN AMES. I WOULD BE *HONORED* IF YOU WOULD *REMAIN* FOR A LITTLE WHILE, AS MY *GUESTS!*

WE'VE *GOT* TO BE *SHOVING OFF*, AMAH. FROM HERE ON, *TIME* IS *MONEY!*

CAPTAIN AMES SEEMED ANXIOUS TOO. YOU REMEMBER THAT NOW

MY MATE IS *RIGHT*, AMAH! WE SAIL *TONIGHT*, BEFORE *MOONRISE*. I WANT TO BE *WELL TO SEA* BY *DAWN*...JUST IN THE EVENT THAT A *REVENUE CUTTER* SHOULD BE NEARBY...

SO BE IT. GO IN PEACE, THEN...UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.

HOW IMPATIENT YOU WERE, BUCKO THOMAS, AS THE UNICORN GLIDED DOWNSTREAM...LIKE A DREAM SHIP... SLOWLY. IT SEEMED LIKE FOREVER. BUT THEN, THERE WAS THE OPEN SEA AHEAD, AND NOW WAS THE TIME. NOW...

QUIET NOW, MEN

LET *ME* GIVE 'IM THE BLADE, BUCKO...

BUT YOUR PLAN HAD BEEN INTERRUPTED
BUCKO! LOOK THERE! TO STARB'RD... BEARIN' DOWN AT US!
BLAST IT! A BRITISH CUTTER! AND CARRYING AT LEAST TEN CANNON. WE'LL HAVE TO RUN FOR IT!
THE CAPTAIN, UNAWARE OF HIS NARROW ESCAPE FROM DEATH, LISTENED TO YOU ORDER THE CREW ALOFT...
OUT ALL SAILS... FULL WIND ASTERN! HOP TO IT!
IT'S NO USE, THOMAS! EVEN WITH ALL SAIL WE COULDN'T OUTRUN HER! HAVE THE MEN BREAK OUT THE ANCHOR CHAIN. WE'LL HAVE TO DUMP THE SLAVES.
NO! WE CAN'T! WE CAN'T GO BACK WITH AN EMPTY HOLD!
WE'LL GO BACK EMPTY OR DANCE AT THE END OF A ROPE! THE ROYAL NAVY HAS NO PATIENCE WITH SLAVE SMUGGLERS! I GAVE YOU AN ORDER, MISTER. BREAK OUT THE CHAIN...
IT HAD BEEN A ROTTEN TWIST OF LUCK. BUT IT HAD TO BE DONE. HOW THE BLACKS HOWLED AND CHANTED AND PRAYED TO THEIR HEATHEN GODS AS THEY WERE HERDED ON DECK AND SECURED TO THE ANCHOR CHAIN. THEY KNEW...
MAKE IT QUICK, LADS!
AND AS THE CUTTER FIRED A SHOT ACROSS THE UNICORN'S BOW, THE ANCHOR WAS DROPPED OVER THE SIDE...
...DRAGGING A SCREAMING, TWISTING CHAIN OF HUMANITY DOWN INTO THE SEA WITH IT
GONE! SHARK BAIT! TWO MONTHS AT SEA... AND WHAT FOR?
FOR A FORTUNE! THERE ARE MORE SLAVES IN AMAH'S BARRACOONS. WE CAN'T BUY. BUT WE CAN TAKE. IF WE GET OUT OF THIS, WE'LL GO BACK FOR 'EM...

YOU GOT OUT OF IT. THE UNICORN HOVE TO... BUT THE EVIDENCE WAS GONE. THERE WAS NOTHING ON BOARD TO PROVE YOUR GUILT WHEN THE BRITISH OFFICERS CAME ABOARD. AFTER A WHILE, YOU WERE UNDER WAY AGAIN...

GO BACK?! NEVER! I *TOLD* YOU, MISTER THOMAS, THIS WAS MY *LAST VOYAGE!* YOU'RE TALKING *BILGE!* IT WOULD BE *SUICIDE*...

NOT IF WE TOOK HIM BY *SURPRISE*...

CAPTAIN AMES HAD TURNED AWAY...

I'VE SAID MY *FINAL WORD,* MISTER THOMAS. WE *SAIL* FOR *HOME*...

DO WE, CAP'N? THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE *WRONG*...

... AND YOU'D PLUNGED THE KNIFE INTO HIS BACK...

THE CAPTAIN FELL. HIS LIFE'S BLOOD RAN RED IN THE SCUPPERS. BUT YOU NEVER NOTICED. YOU LOOKED OVER THE UNICORN, AND SHE SEEMED TO LEAP UNDER YOUR FEET. YOURS! AND THE UNICORN WAS GOING TO BE ONLY THE BEGINNING...

THROW HIS BODY OVER THE SIDE! WE'RE GOING BACK UP THE PONGO...

IT WASN'T JUST A CARGO OF SLAVES YOU'D WANTED THEN, WAS IT, BUCKO THOMAS? SUDDENLY YOU SAW YOURSELF AS A KING... WITH AMAH'S DOMAIN AS YOUR KINGDOM. AS YOU CAME UP THE PONGO, PASSED THE BEND, AND APPROACHED THE STOCKADE, IT SEEMED ALMOST TOO EASY...

NOT EVEN A *GUARD* AT THE GATE! *I'LL* GO ASHORE *ALONE!* AMAH WON'T *EXPECT* ANYTHING! WHEN I'VE *FINISHED HIM OFF,* I'LL *CALL!* THAT WILL BE *YOUR* SIGNAL TO *COME ASHORE* AND *CUT DOWN ANY FOULAH THAT OBJECTS...*

BUT AS YOU'D REACHED THE SILENT RIVER BANK, CANNONS BEGAN TO FLASH AND ROAR FROM THE STOCKADE AND IRON BALLS SLAMMED INTO THE UNICORN... SMASHING HER RIGGING... RIPPING HER HULL...

WHAT THE...?

VOOM BOOM

BLAM

AND AS THE UNICORN HAD FLAMED AND BURNED, SINKING INTO THE RIVER, YOU'D LOOKED AROUND... AT AMAH AND THE FOULAH GUARDS SURROUNDING YOU...

WELCOME, MEESTER T'OMAS! I DID NOT DREAM THAT I WOULD SEE YOU AGAIN. BUT ALLAH IS GOOD TO ME. WHERE IS MY FRIEND, CAPTAIN AMES?

DEAD! WHAT WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, AMAH? WHY'D YOU SINK THE UNICORN...?

WHY? HAD AMAH KNOWN? HAD HE GUESSED? THE QUESTION BEAT ■ YOUR TROUBLED BRAIN. BUT AMAH HADN'T TOLD YOU. INSTEAD, YOU'D BEEN BATHED, GIVEN CLEAN CLOTHES, FED LAVISHLY. YOU KNEW MOSLEM CUSTOM. THIS MEAL HAD BEEN YOUR LAST. NOW AS YOU SIT, FINISHING YOUR WINE; AMAH SPEAKS, INTERRUPTING YOUR REVERIE...

SO... THE CAPTAIN IS DEAD! A PITY! I HAD WISHED GREATLY TO SEE HIM ONCE MORE. BUT... IT IS SAID... A MAN CANNOT ESCAPE KISMET. IS IT NOT SO, MEESTER T'OMAS? NOT EVEN YOU...

KISMET AGAIN, EH, AMAH... MEANING IT WAS MY FATE TO DIE HERE...

EXACTLY, MEESTER T'OMAS! GUARDS!

ALL RIGHT! DO YOUR WORST, YOU DIRTY FLESH PEDDLER. BUT IF I DIE HERE, IT'S BECAUSE I MADE IT HAPPEN. ME! BUCKO THOMAS! THE CAP'N DIDN'T WANT TO COME BACK! I DID!

KISMET... FATE... ALLAH... THAT SAME, SOFT, STUPID PHILOSOPHY. YOU MAKE YOUR OWN FATE, DON'T YOU, BUCKO THOMAS? YOU START TO SAY IT AGAIN BUT AMAH CLAPS HIS HANDS AND THE GUARD STEPS FORWARD WITH THE 'KLOUT' IN HIS BIG DARK HANDS. AND SUDDENLY, YOU CAN'T HELP YOURSELF...

NO... NO!

YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF DEATH, BUCKO THOMAS, BUT THE 'KLOUT'... THE STRANGLER'S CORD IS SLOW... SO HORRIBLY SLOW. YOU FIGHT... BUT IT'S NO GOOD...

NO... NO, DON'T... AGH-H-H-H-CH...

YES, MY FRIEND! YES! WHAT MUST BE, MUST BE. YOU WERE WRONG! YOU DID NOT DECIDE YOUR FATE. THAT WAS DECIDED FOR YOU. IT WAS WRITTEN...

AS YOU DIE, AMAH REACHES INTO THE FOLDS OF HIS ROBES AND BRINGS FORTH THE GLEAMING IRRIDESCENT SPHERES, DROPPING THEM UPON YOUR TWITCHING SUFFOCATING BODY...

...BUT HOW COULD YOU KNOW THAT THE TRADER TO WHOM I TRIED TO SELL YOUR LATE CAPTAIN'S PEARLS WOULD LOOK AT THEM AND TELL ME THEY WERE WORTHLESS GLOBES OF PASTE?

THE END

LOBLOLLY BOY

In the days of old sailing vessels, a boy beginning his first voyage was called a 'loblolly.' On a good ship, the taking on of such a green hand was an occasion of skylarking and ribald hazing. If the loblolly showed signs of seasickness (a pronounced green tinge about the gills) he was offered such 'wonder drugs' as chewing tobacco or a piece of salt junk. After munching the salt meat, either pork or beef, or chewing the tobacco, the victim's misery was two-fold. Even as he lay limply doubled over the rail, he was the recipient of mock sympathy and further advice as to other 'miracle' antidotes. Fortunately, he was invariably *too weak* to heed any more suggestions.

The loblolly's first days of sea duty were full of futile quests ordered by his shipmates. He would be sent to the bosun's locker to get some red oil for the larboard light and green oil for the starboard light. He would be sent to the man at the wheel to get the key to the starboard watch from whence he was to go and 'wind it.' He would be sent to find *Charley Noble* and tell him to report to the first mate. (In the seaman's lingo 'Charley Noble' was the pipe of the galley stove. To shoot Charley Noble was to discharge a pistol into the pipe to clear it of soot.) He would be sent to the galley and told to ask the cook for a pailful of fresh steam to prime the donkey engine. Or perhaps he would be told to fetch the key to the keelson. Such credulity is not rare among the uninitiated!

The loblolly soon learned that his captain was not only the ruler in his ship, but also a father, physician, preacher, and even judge to both crew and passengers. When the Master, the Old Man, was on deck, the weather side of the quarter-deck belonged to him, and the moment he appeared, the officer of the watch left that side and went over to the leeward (pronounced lu-ard). The loblolly learned that the captain was always the last into a small boat and the first out of it. And when a seaman was summoned to the captain's cabin, he removed his cap and dropped it to the deck just outside the door.

The neophyte mariner learned that it was a breach of etiquette for a seaman to lock his sea chest while on board his ship. If he did so, when he returned to the forecastle from his watch on deck, he would find that the cover had been nailed down.

If the seaman was in either the British or United States navies, he would wear a scarf of black silk; originally a mark of mourning for the death of Lord Nelson. He would learn to keep his 'Lord Rodney' braided properly . . . that being the old sea term for his pigtail. If he were in the Royal Navy, he would be exposed to a form of canned meat called 'Harriet Lane' . . . deceptively named after a murdered girl whose body was cut up and hidden in a box. Then there was a mixture more aptly called 'salt horse', beef or pork pickled in brine.

The loblolly soon succumbed to some of the superstitions of the sea, or at least he respected them in the presence of his older shipmates. Many seamen believed that the ship's bell would toll just as she was sinking, even if it were securely lashed in place. Paring the nails or cutting hair during a calm was believed to coax *good* winds, during a blow such acts were considered *bad* omens. If a shark followed the ship, it was regarded as an ill omen . . . especially if there were sick on board. It was believed that a shark was able to scent a victim and would follow for miles a ship that bore a dead body. And to lose the ship's colors; to pass a flag through the rungs of a ladder, or through a window, would bring ill fortune to ship and men.

Through it all, the veteran seaman and tender loblolly offered a sailor's prayer for a day of rest—*"Come day, go day, God send Sunday."*

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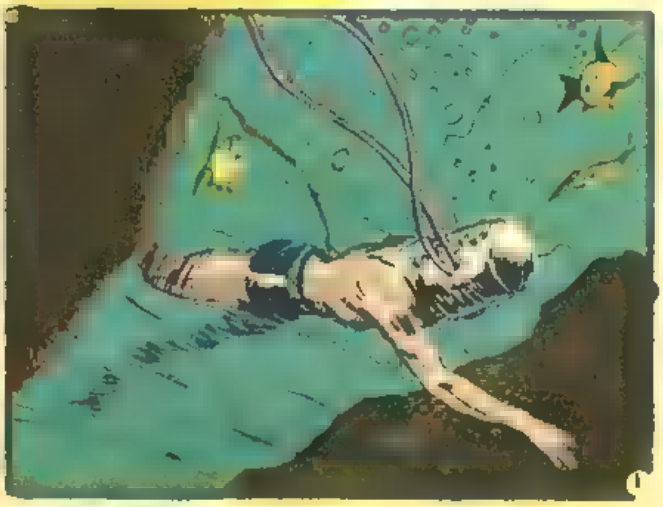
the SHELL GAME

SLOWLY, YOU CLAMBER OVER THE GUNWHALE OF THE SLOOP AND STEP GINGERLY DOWN THE RUNGS OF THE IRON LADDER THAT REACHES ITS RUSTY LEGS INTO THE LAPPING BLUE-GREEN WATER. YOU CAN HEAR THE RYTHMIC THUMP, THUMP OF THE AIR COMPRESSOR ON DECK, PUMPING LIFE-GIVING OXYGEN THROUGH THE RUBBER HOSE THAT RUNS TO YOUR DIVING HELMET. YOU CAN FEEL THE HEAT OF THE BLINDING SUN OVERHEAD, BAKING YOUR BARE FLESH. YOU LOOK DOWN AT THE AWKWARD RUBBER FLIPPERS ON YOUR FEET. AND THEN YOU STARE INTO THE MYSTERIOUS DEPTHS BELOW AND YOU KNOW THAT THIS IS YOUR LAST TRY, JOHN ORDWAY... THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO FIND YOUR DREAM...

THE BLUE-GREEN DEPTHS CHANGE AND DARKEN INTO PURPLE GREY AS YOU DESCEND, EELING THROUGH MYRIADS OF GAILY-COLORED FISH AND SHIFTING, SWAYING PATCHES OF UNDERSEA VEGETATION... DOWN TOWARD THE TREACHEROUS CORAL REEF... DOWN TOWARD YOUR DREAM...



WHEN DID YOUR DREAM BEGIN, JOHN ORDWAY? DO YOU REMEMBER? DO YOU REMEMBER THE OLD CHARTS AND MAPS AND SEA LOGS OF LONG-FORGOTTEN VOYAGES YOU FOUND HIDDEN AWAY ON THE DUSTY SHELVES OF THE SHIPPING CONCERN WHERE YOU WORKED? DO YOU REMEMBER PORING OVER THEM... OVER THE OLD ACCOUNTS OF SHIP-WRECKS... AND FINDING *THAT ONE RECORD*... *AGAIN* AND *AGAIN*...?

HERE'S *ANOTHER* MENTION OF THE *MARIA SANTOS*. "1621... OFF THE FLORIDA KEYS... REYNOLD DE LUISAN SENT THE SPANISH GALLEON TO THE BOTTOM OFF RAZOR REEF. THE GALLEON CARRIED PLATE... GEMS... *GOLD*..."

DO YOU REMEMBER HOW THE DREAM HELD YOU, JOHN ORDWAY... HOW SLEEP BECAME AN IMPOSSIBILITY AS YOU TOSSED AND TURNED AT NIGHT... HOW MEALS HAD NO APPEAL... HOW WORK BECAME A TORTURE? DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU CHECKED AND CROSS-CHECKED, HAUNTING THE LIBRARIES, ADDING, ACCUMLATING, CULLING BITS OF INFORMATION HERE AND THERE...?

...DE LUISAN *WAS* A BUCCANEER! THERE *IS* SUCH A NAME! THE MARIA SANTOS *WAS* SUNK OFF THE FLORIDA COAST! AND THERE'S *NO RECORD* OF IT *EVER BEING FOUND!* THEN IT MUST *STILL* BE *THERE... UNDER RAZOR REEF*...

DO YOU REMEMBER THE TRIPS YOU TOOK ON WEEK-ENDS... OUT OF MIAMI... DOWN TO THE KEYS... AND HOW THE DREAM GREW STRONG AS YOU VERIFIED OLD LEGENDS... QUESTIONED THE LOCAL INHABITANTS...?

THAT'S *RIGHT!* MY *OWN WIFE* ONCE FOUND A PIECE OF EIGHT... AFTER A *STORM*... WASHED UP ON THE *BEACH!*

THERE IS A MAN IN *PORT BELLO* WHO HAS A *DOUBLOON* IN HIS POSSESSION...

...HOW YOU STOOD ON THE BLAZING SAND AND GAZED OUT OVER THE BLUE EXPANSE TO THE ROLLING WHITE-CAPS THAT WAS RAZOR REEF...?

IT'S *THERE!* IT'S *GOT* TO BE THERE! *THOUSANDS* AND *THOUSANDS* OF *DOLLARS* WORTH OF *ONZAS, PEARLS, PIECES OF EIGHT, DOUBLOONS... JEWELS... SILVER* AND *GOLD* PLATE! I'LL *FIND* IT! I *MUST!*

...AND HOW YOUR DREAM ALMOST FADED WHEN YOU DISCOVERED HOW MUCH IT WOULD *TAKE* TO MAKE YOUR DREAM COME *TRUE*...?

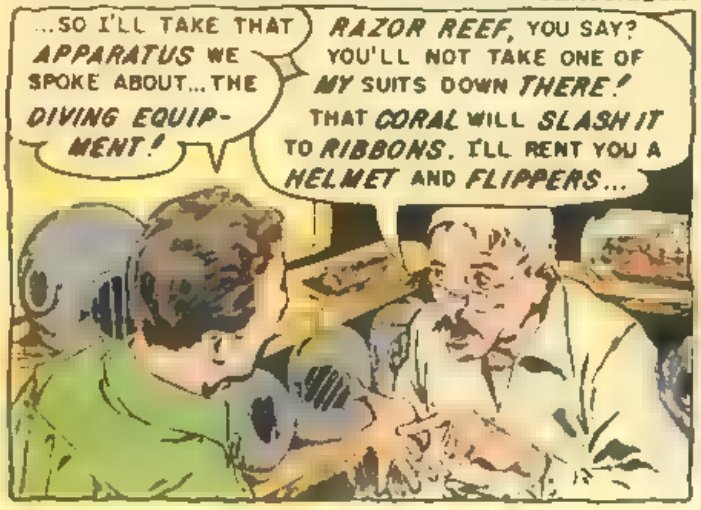
CHARTER MY SLOOP? DIVING? THAT'LL BE A *HUNDRED DOLLARS A DAY*, MISTER, AND *YOU* SUPPLY THE *EQUIPMENT!*

DIVING EQUIPMENT? HELMET? COMPRESSOR? LINES? RIGS? IT'LL COST AT LEAST *FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS* FOR EVERYTHING YOU'LL *NEED*, MISTER...

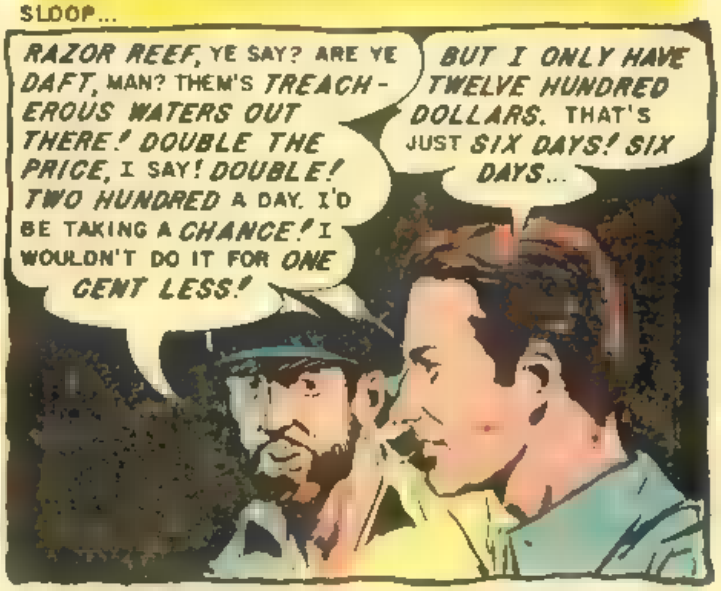
YOU WERE GETTING ON IN YEARS, JOHN ORDWAY! LIFE WAS PASSING YOU BY! YOU WERE NOTHING BUT A *DROP* IN A SEA OF *ORDINARY MEN*... A *DESPERATE* DROP! DO YOU REMEMBER HOW *HONESTY DIED* FOR THE *PROSPECT* OF *FINDING YOUR DREAM*...?

THE *COMPANY'S MONEY! FIFTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS!* JUST WHAT I *NEED!* THEY'LL *NEVER* SUSPECT. I'LL *JUGGLE THE BOOKS... COVER IT UP...* AND *AFTER* MY VACATION... *RETURN IT!*

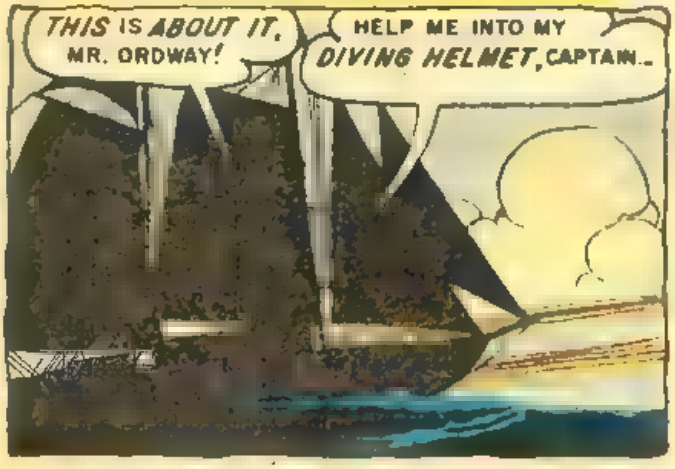
YOU BECAME A *THIEF* FOR YOUR DREAM, JOHN ORDWAY. *REMEMBER?* YOU *STOLE FIFTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS!* AND *WITH* IT, YOU LEFT ON YOUR *VACATION*. TWO WEEKS. *TWO WEEKS* TO FIND A *TREASURE* HOARDED AND GUARDED BY RAZOR REEF FOR *CENTURIES*...

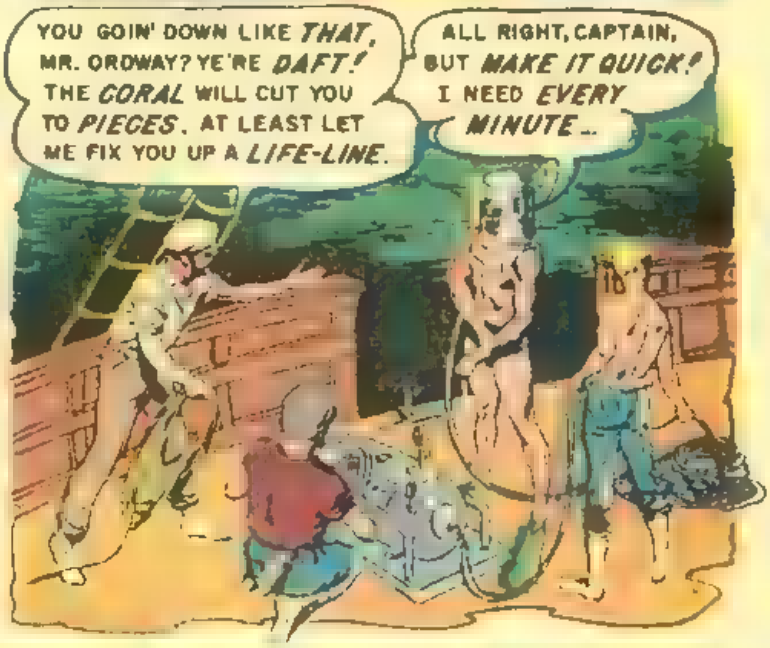


YOU BOUGHT SUPPLIES, RENTED EQUIPMENT, AND THEN YOU COUNTED WHAT WAS LEFT AND CHARTERED THAT SLOOP...

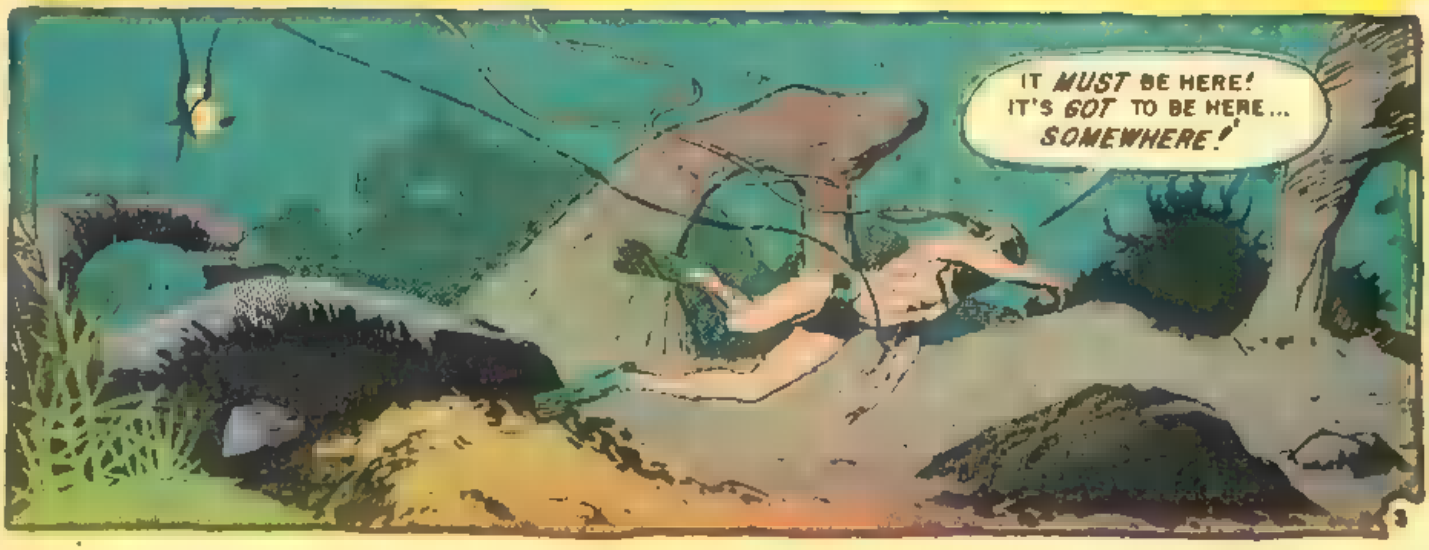


SIX DAYS, JOHN ORDWAY. *SIX DAYS TO FIND YOUR DREAM*. NOT VERY *LONG*, IS IT? DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOUR HEART POUNDED IN YOUR CHEST AS THE SLOOP DROPPED ANCHOR OVER THE SPOT YOU'D MARKED ON THE CHARTS...?

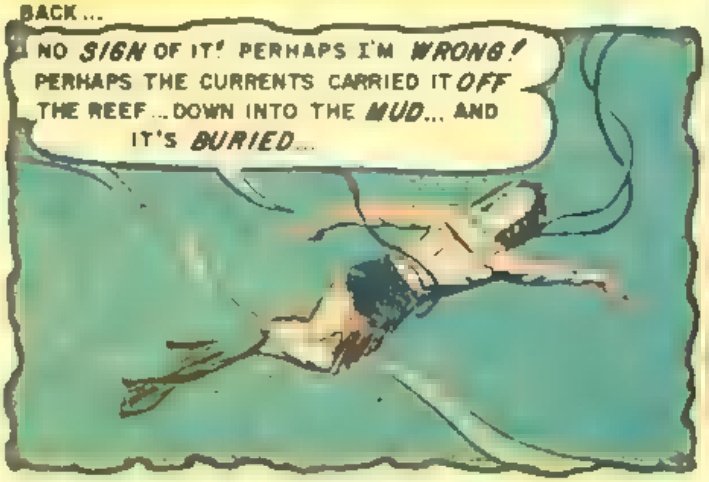




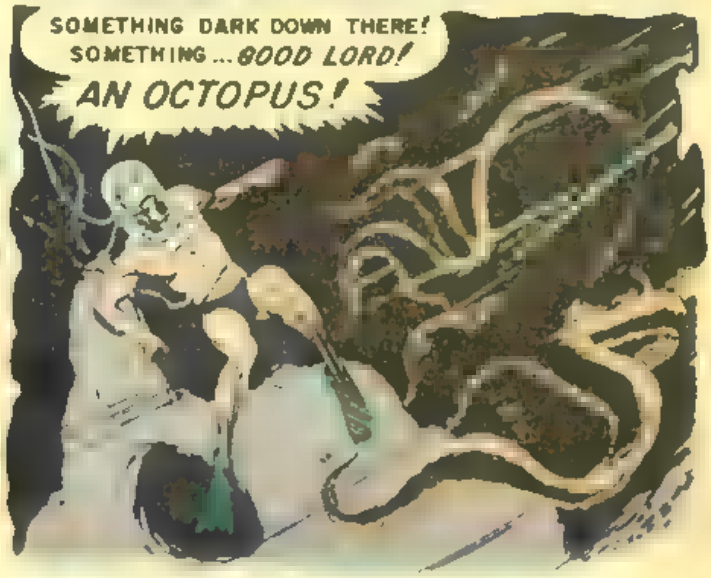
DO YOU REMEMBER THAT *FIRST DIVE*, JOHN ORDWAY... PLUNGING INTO THE ROILING WATER... KICKING DOWN... DOWN TO THE SHELL-FISH AND SEAWEED-COVERED REEF... SEARCHING THE MURKY GLOOM... *SEARCHING FOR YOUR DREAM*...?



FIFTEEN HUNDRED DOLLARS! THAT'S THE *PRICE* OF YOUR DREAM, *ISN'T* IT, JOHN? THAT'S HOW MUCH YOU *STOLE!* THAT'S HOW MUCH YOUR FIRM WILL BE *WANTING BACK!* YOU LOOKED HARD THAT FIRST DAY, DIDN'T YOU...SKIMMING OVER THE CORAL...DOUBLING BACK...



DO YOU REMEMBER THE CREATURE THAT TRIED TO KEEP YOU FROM YOUR DREAM, JOHN...?

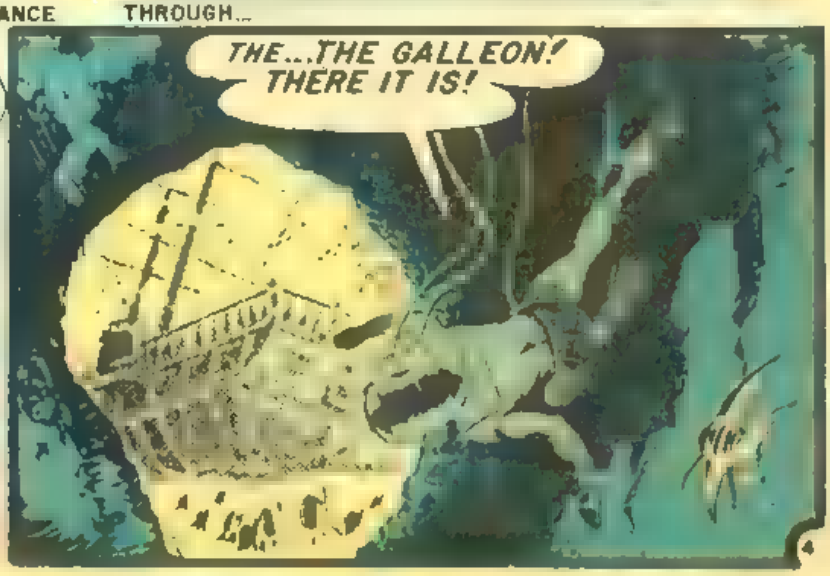


GOD BLESS THAT *LIFELINE* YOU WORE, EH, JOHN? THREE SHARP TUGS AND YOU WERE YANKED UPWARD AND OUT OF REACH OF THOSE CRUSHING, SNAKE-LIKE TENTACLES...

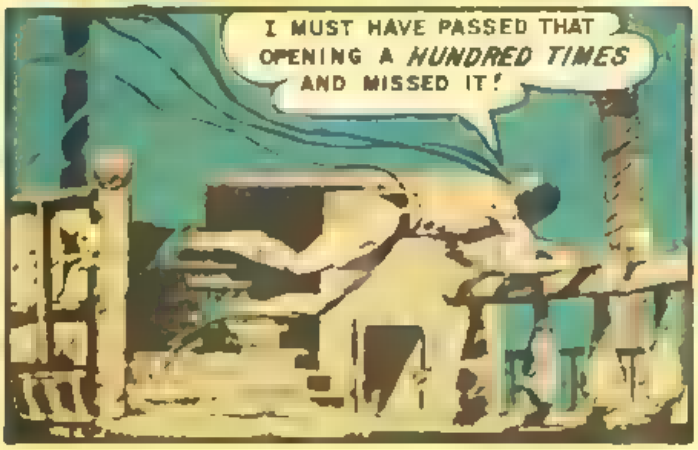
THE DAYS SLIPPED BY. TWO...THREE. YOU GREW WEARY... EXHAUSTED... AND YET YOU *DID NOT FIND* YOUR DREAM. THE FOURTH DAY WAS RUINED BY A SUDDEN SQUALL THAT CHURNED THE SEA ABOVE THE REEF INTO A FROTHY MOUNTAINOUS MONSTER

THE FIFTH DAY, TOO, PASSED WITH NO LUCK. AND NOW THE SIXTH IS ALMOST OVER. YOU'RE ON YOUR LAST DIVE...YOUR LAST TRY...YOUR LAST CHANCE TO FIND YOUR DREAM...

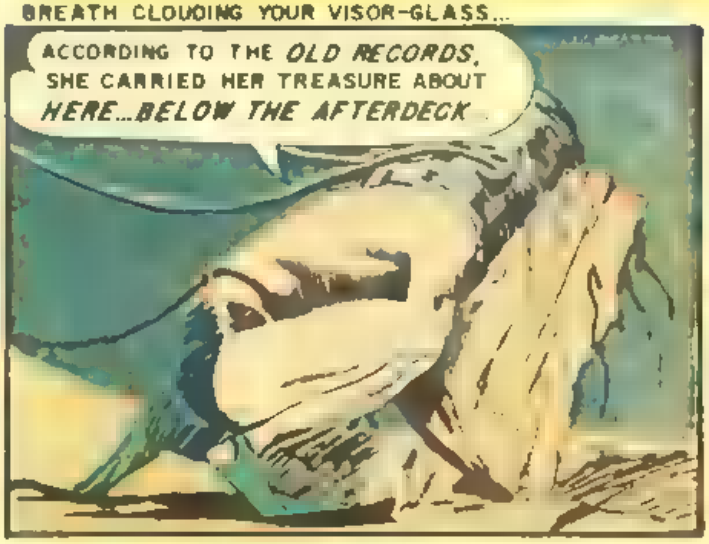
SUDDENLY YOU SEE IT... AN OPENING IN THE CORAL... LIKE A DOORWAY INTO AN UNDERSEA ROOM. YOU GLIDE THROUGH...



THE THREE-CENTURY-OLD HULK LIES IN THE CORAL TOMB THAT TIME HAS ERECTED AROUND IT. IT LIES WITH ITS ROTTING MASTS AND SPARS...ITS EXPOSED RIBS AND TORN PLANKS...LIKE A SKELETON...SILENT IN ITS UNDERSEA GRAVE. AND NOW YOU ARE KICKING OVER ITS BARNACLED AND PLANT-COVERED DECK...



YOU RIP AWAY THE ROTTED DECK PLANKS...PEER INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE BULKHEADS...EAGERLY...THE SWEAT ROLLING DOWN YOUR FACE...YOUR HOT GREEDY BREATH CLOUDING YOUR VISOR-GLASS...



PULLING YOUR AIR HOSE AND LIFELINE DOWN AFTER YOU, YOU DROP INTO THE DARKNESS, LIGHTING YOUR LAMP, FINGERING ITS BEAM AROUND YOU; AND THEN...

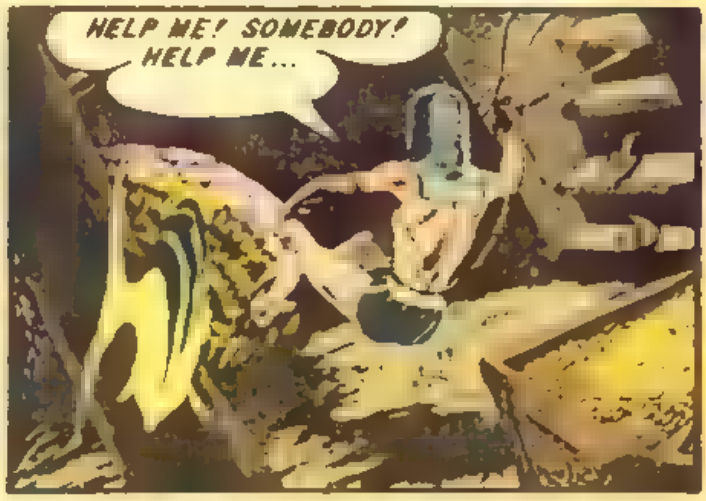
YOU FALL UPON THE ROTTING CHESTS SPILLING OUT THEIR FORTUNES OF DOUBLOONS AND JADE AND FLAT-CUT RUBIES AND ORIENTAL PEARLS AND BLUE AND WHITE AMETHYSTS AND PIECES OF EIGHT...

AND IN YOUR EAGERNESS, YOU PLUNGE YOUR HANDS INTO THE MOUNTAINS OF GOLD COIN...YOUR FEET SLIPPING IN THE SLUDGE...SKIDDING IN THE SLIME... SLIDING TOWARD THE HULKING MASS BEHIND YOU

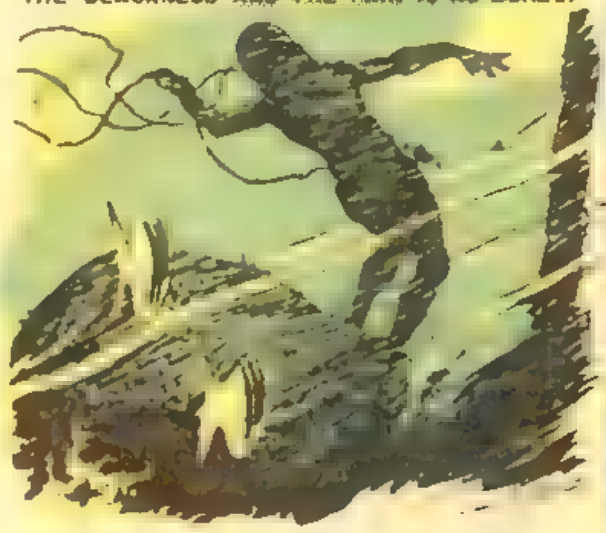
AND AS THE GIANT SEA CLAM...FOUR FEET ACROSS AND WEIGHING HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF POUNDS... CLOSES ITS HUGE JAW-SHELLS ON YOUR LEGS...YOU SCREAM...A PIERCING SCREAM THAT FILLS YOUR DIVING HELMET AND RUPTURES YOUR OWN EARDRUMS...

SLOWLY, RELENTLESSLY, THE MIGHTY MONSTER CLAMPS ITS GIGANTIC VICE-LIKE SHELLS CLOSED... GRINDING BONE... CRUSHING AND TEARING FLESH AND MUSCLE. YOU PULL ...TUG... DESPERATELY TRYING TO FREE YOURSELF...

NAUSEA GAGS YOU. BILE ERUPTS FROM YOUR MOUTH THE WHITE HOT KNIVES OF PAIN SPEAR THROUGH YOUR BODY... THREATEN TO EXPLODE YOUR TORTURED BRAIN. BLACKNESS BEGINS TO CLOSE IN...

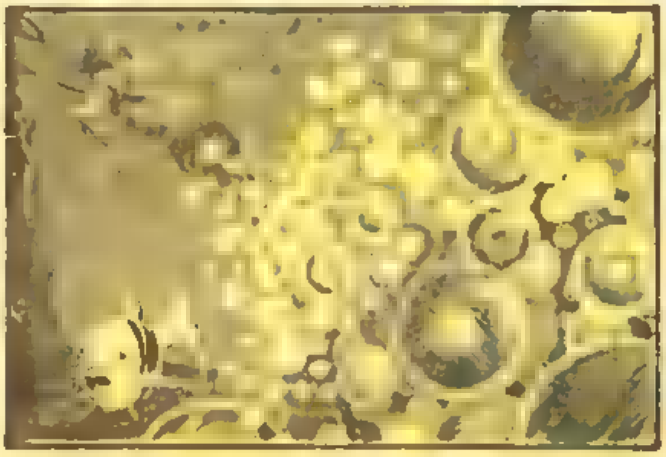


YOU YANK AT YOUR LIFE-LINE... ONCE... TWICE... THREE TIMES. THEN YOU SLIP INTO THE BLACKNESS AND THE PAIN IS NO MORE...

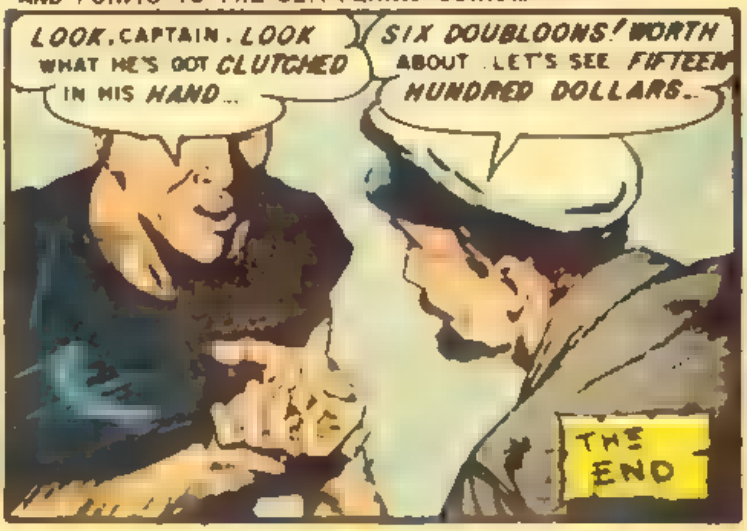


ABOVE THE REEF, THE SLOOP RIDES EASILY. ON ITS DECK, THE CAPTAIN AND HIS CREW RECEIVE THE SIGNAL...

A VIOLENT TUG WRENCHES YOU CLEAR OF THE IMPRISONING GIANT SEA CLAM AND BUBBLES OF ESCAPING AIR MIX WITH THE REDISH-BLACK STREAM OF BLOOD THAT SPEWS FORTH. YOU'RE DRAGGED UPWARD... ACROSS THE JAGGED PLANK EDGES... SCRAPING ALONG THE RAZOR-SHARP CORAL... LIKE A LIFELESS PUPPET ON A STRING...



THEY BRING YOUR LIMP BODY OVER THE GUNWHALE OF THE SLOOP AND SEE THE RAW RED STUMPS OF YOUR LEGS AND THEY KNOW THAT IT IS *TOO LATE*... THAT YOU ARE *DEAD!* THEN, ONE OF THE CREWMEN PRIES OPEN YOUR TIGHT FIST... AND POINTS TO THE GLITTERING COINS...



E.C. WENT TO SEA

IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER NEW TREND...

AND WE CAME UP WITH...

SAGAS OF THE SEA, SHIPS, PLUNDER AND...

PIRACY

NOW YOU SEARCH FOR IT!

BUT IF YOU *CAN'T FIND PIRACY* AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND, YOU CAN *SUBSCRIBE!* JUST FILL OUT THE COUPON AND MAIL, TOGETHER WITH *ONE HUNDRED PIECES OF CENT* (THAT'S ONE BUCK, LAND-LUBBERS!), TO:

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THE DIVE

Fledgling Diver Harry Mason stood his ground firmly, legs parted, hands on hips smartly, waiting for the crewmen to finish bolting on the huge iron helmet to the chest support of his metal breastplate. As the last screw met contact, all outward sounds died away. A rhythmic thumping took the place of the normal everyday world, telling him that precious oxygen was filtering in through his air-hose. The deck officer now thumped him twice on the helmet and motioned that the time to submerge was at hand.

He walked towards the railing and grabbed hold of the guide ladder, making certain that his life-line was free and untangled under him. Another thump on his helmet and he was stepping down into the green-blue water below. He sunk like a stone, his feet suddenly very light and tingling but actually weighed down to plummet him towards the very bottom.

The light of day grew somber, darkening into a weird shimmer with each downward speeding inch. Gaily-colored flecks changed to gray whorl patterns that mingled with the bluish-tinted bubbles escaping from his air-hose. His muscles tightened under the increased pressure while his lungs heaved deeply, sucking in fresh oxygen being pumped in from above. Droplets of perspiration beaded his forehead and trickled down his face. His entire body was drenched in sweat. But he knew this clammy feeling of helplessness was due to his cramped, uncomfortable position inside the suit heightened by his tension and inexperience.

But his objective was clear. The huge sea anchor that now loomed up towards him like an eerie spectre from the past lay at the bottom of his descent. All he had to do was tie his spare cable line to it and have it pulled topside.

It seemed easy—it LOOKED easy, but Harry Mason knew that death lurked here. There were other dangers besides the always constant threat of accidents. Oxygen-intoxication, for instance—a sudden change in the oxygen content being pumped to a diver frequently caused by a defective valve—could produce a dilation of the heart if heavy weights were lifted under-water. Or if the proper pressure failed in the suit—a pressure lower than the water pressure outside—he could be crushed into jelly. Or if too much oxygen came in, his suit would puff up shooting him to the top to dash his brains out under an iron hull of some ship above. Or if none of these things happened, there was fathom-deafness to worry about—pressure affecting a man's eardrums often accompanied by sinus pains worse than any torture.

So Mason went about his job with the utmost caution, yanking at the cable line only when he was finished. The huge sea anchor budged in angry protest as the line about it grew taut, then wrenched free out of its bed of mud and glided towards the surface pulled up from above. The diver rose slowly behind it, stopping now and then to rest. The greatest danger of all in a dive was to fall prey to the terrible bends—bubbles of nitrogen that formed in a man's blood at deep pressures and had to be shrunk to microscopic size and eventually diluted by the body's natural processes before ascent could be completed.

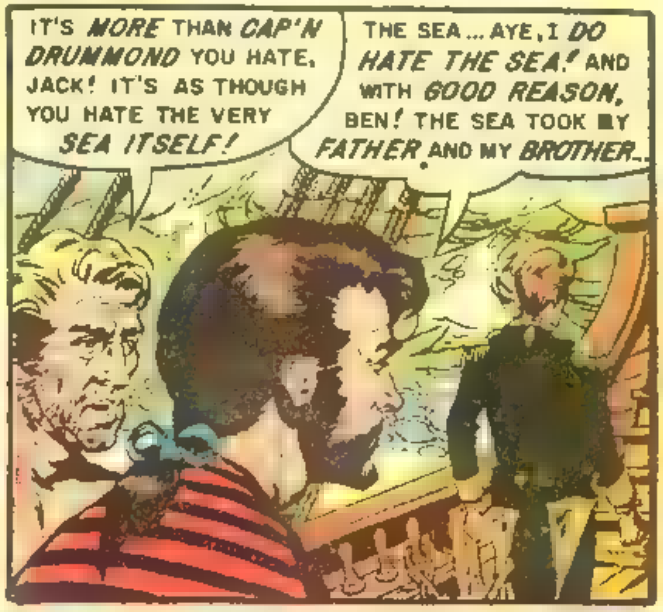
All these obstacles carefully averted, Harry Mason reached the top and was helped back on deck. Moments later, he stood free and clear of his gear, puffing gratefully on a cigarette. The deck officer shouted a command and the sea anchor dropped from the winch that held it, sinking back into the depths below.

"Very good, Mason," he said, facing the diver, "Tomorrow you'll swallow sea-water." Mason nodded soberly, saluted, and turned away from his superior to look past the gym window of the Diving School and the water-filled diving bell he had just left. There—outside, not more than a few hundred yards away, stretched the deep blue sea—waiting.

A FITTING END

THERE WAS A TENSION HOVERING OVER THE BRITISH FRIGATE *SEA GULL*... AN AURA OF IMMINENT VIOLENCE THAT EVERY LIMEY SAILOR ABOARD COULD FEEL IN HIS BONES. IT HUNG OVER THE PROUD SQUARE-RIGGER LIKE AN INVISIBLE, SMOTHERING SHROUD. IT HAD SETTLED DOWN UPON THE SHIP EVEN BEFORE SHE'D GLIDED FROM HER BERTH AT PORTSMOUTH, WHEN FIRST A CERTAIN SULLEN, STUBBORN TAR AND HIS SNEERING, ARROGANT, YOUNG SKIPPER HAD LAID EYES UPON EACH OTHER. AND THE TENSION HAD MOUNTED DAY BY DAY, AS THE BAD BLOOD BETWEEN FO'CASTLE HAND *JACK ROARK* AND SHIP'S CAPTAIN *EDMUND DRUMMOND* SEETHED AND BUBBLED AND GREW HOT IN THEIR VEINS. AN EXPLOSION WAS BOUND TO COME. IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME...

JACK ROARK STARED AFTER THE CAPTAIN WITH HATE AND LOATHING AS HE TURNED AND WENT BELOW. BEN MARTIN, HIS SHIPMATE, FOLLOWED HIS GAZE...



I WAS *SEVEN*, THEN. AND MY YOUNGER BROTHER, CHARLES, WAS *FOUR*. MY FAMILY'D LIVED IN *CAIRO* AND AFTER *MOTHER* DIED OF THE *PLAGUE* THERE, *FATHER* DECIDED TO BRING US BACK TO *ENGLAND*..

"WE BOOKED PASSAGE ON THE BARK *BOMBAY* AND WE HEADED WEST ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN, BOUND FOR HOME... LIVERPOOL, THAT IS. ONE DAY, WE WERE ON DECK WITH MY FATHER, WHEN HE PULLED SOMETHING FROM HIS POCKET..."

DO YOU SEE HOW I HAVE *CUT* THIS *GOLD CROWN*, MY SONS... CUT IT IN *SUCH A WAY* THAT *NO OTHER HALVES* COULD *FIT TOGETHER SO PERFECTLY!* AND HOW I HAVE DRILLED A *HOLE* IN EACH HALF AND SLIPPED A *CHAIN* THROUGH..?

"FATHER MUST HAVE HAD SOME PREMONITION OF DISASTER FOR I REMEMBER THE LOOK IN HIS EYES AS HE SLIPPED FIRST ONE CHAIN WITH HALF THE SPLIT CROWN AROUND MY NECK AND THEN THE SECOND CHAIN WITH THE OTHER HALF AROUND MY YOUNGER BROTHER'S NECK..."

IF ANYTHING SHOULD *HAPPEN TO ME*, JACK... ALWAYS *TAKE CARE* OF YOUR BROTHER. *STAY TOGETHER ALWAYS!* BUT, IF YOU SHOULD EVER BE *PARTED*, YOU'LL ALWAYS *KNOW* EACH OTHER BY THESE *HALF-CROWNS*

"HARDLY HAD THOSE WORDS SPILLED FROM MY FATHER'S MOUTH, THAN A MUFFLED ROAR ECHOED OVER THE CHOPPY WATERS AND A BLACK IRON BALL SCREAMED DOWN UPON OUR BARK, SPLINTERING THE MIZZEN MAST."

LATEEN-RIGGED SLOOPS! PIRATES!

"*BARBARY PIRATES* THEY WERE... FIERCE AND MERCILESS! THEY RAKED OUR DECKS WITH FIVE POUNDERS AS THEY BORE DOWN UPON US... SHATTERING OUR HULL... KILLING AND MAIMING..."

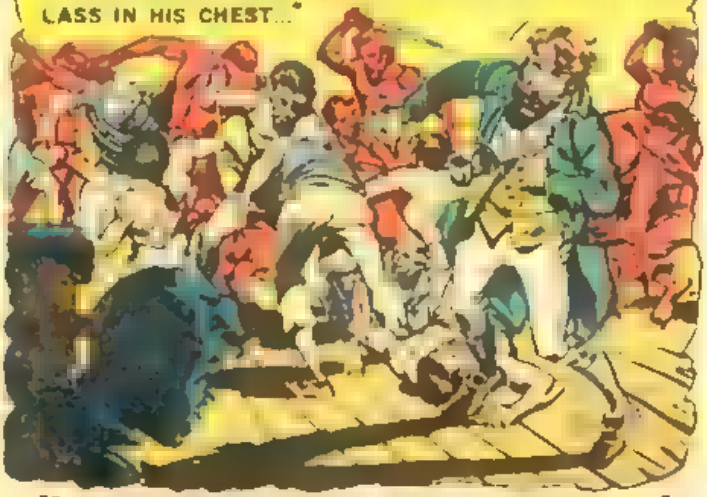
"OUR BARK WAS A SCENE OF UTTER CONFUSION AND PANIC AS THE PIRATE SLOOPS SWUNG ALONGSIDE US AND THE BLOOD-CRAZED PLUNDERERS LEAPED ABOARD. MEN SCREAMED AS CUTLASSES HACKED INTO FLESH. DEAD AND DYING STAINED OUR DECK BOARDS CRIMSON. SOMEHOW, IN THE TERRIFIED MILLING OF STRUGGLING HUMANITY, MY YOUNGER BROTHER, CHARLES, WAS SEPARATED FROM US..."

CHARLES! CHARLES!

OH, DADDY! *DADDY*. WHERE *IS* HE?

"FATHER PUSHED ME BEHIND THE CAPSTAN AND PLUNGED INTO THE MELEE OF FLASHING KNIVES AND SWISHING SWORDS AND SHRIEKS OF PAIN, SEARCHING FOR MY LOST YOUNG BROTHER. I COWERED THERE, A TERRORIZED SEVEN-YEAR-OLD, GETTING MY FIRST VIEW OF WANTON, SAVAGE MURDER..."

"I SAW THE HOPELESSLY OUTNUMBERED CREW OF THE *BOMBAY* DROP LIKE FLIES, ONE BY ONE. I SAW MY FATHER CAREEN TOWARDS ME, GURGLING BLOOD, A CUTLASS IN HIS CHEST..."



"I SAW HIM DIE, SCARCELY SIX FEET FROM WHERE I HID."

"THE SAVAGES SPARED ONLY THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN. THEY HERDED THEM BACK ONTO THEIR OWN SLOOPS, INTENDING TO SELL THEM ALL INTO SLAVERY. I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF MY YOUNG BROTHER CHARLES BEING CARRIED BY A PARTICULARLY HIDEOUS GIANT OF A MAN. HE WAS SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY..."

"THEY SET THE *BOMBAY* AFIRE AND SAILED AWAY. I CREPT, DAZED AND FRIGHTENED, FROM MY HIDING PLACE... STUMBLED THROUGH THE FLAMES... AND LEAPED OVER THE SIDE AND INTO THE SEA..."

"I VAGUELY REMEMBER CLINGING TO A FLOATING SPAR FOR LONG, LONG HOURS UNTIL A BRITISH MERCHANT SHIP, ATTRACTED BY THE FLAMES, CAME BY AND PICKED ME UP..."

AND SO, I'VE HAD A *DREAD* OF THE SEA EVER *SINCE* THEN, BEN, BUT I'VE MADE IT A *CAREER* IN HOPES OF *SOMEDAY* FINDING MY *YOUNG BROTHER*. WHAT MAKES IT SO *DIFFICULT* IS THAT HE WAS SO *YOUNG!* HIS *NAME* IS PROBABLY *DIFFERENT!* MY *ONLY CHANCE* IS *THE HALF-CROWN*...

ONCE, I MET A MAN IN LONDON WHO THOUGHT HE'D *SEEN* SOMEONE WEARING A HALF-CROWN LIKE THIS ABOUT *HIS* NECK... A *SLAVE*... IN *CUBA*. *THAT'S* WHY I JOINED THE *NAVY*. I'VE GOT TO *GET* THERE! I MUST KNOW IF IT'S *CHARLES!* I.

ROARK! GET ALOFT! NO MAN ABOARD *MY* SHIP WILL *STAND IDLE* AND *GAB* LIKE A *SILLY WOMAN!*

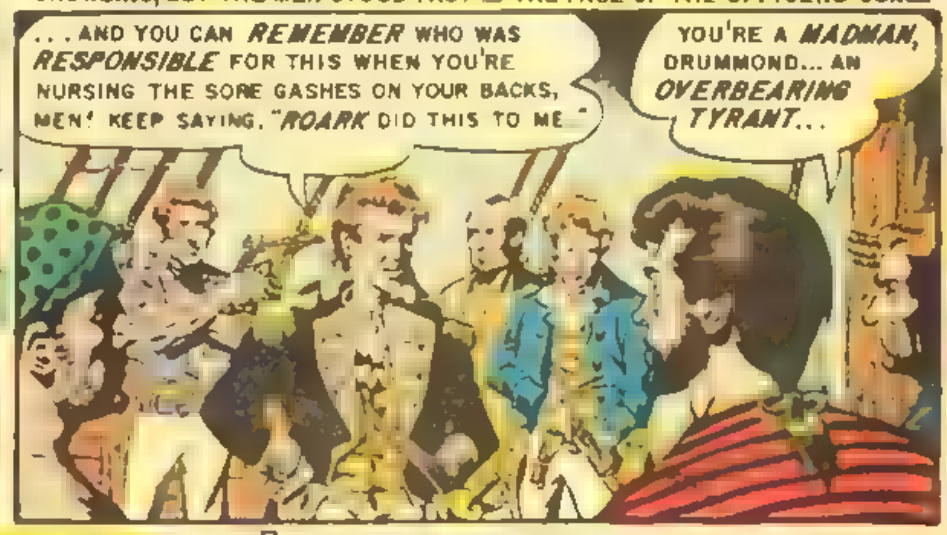
SEAMAN ROARK IGNORED CAPTAIN DRUMMOND'S SNEERING WORDS! THE FURIOUS SKIPPER GRABBED THE TAR'S SHOULDER, SPINNING HIM AROUND ...

ROARK'S FIST EXPLODED AGAINST THE FRIGATE COMMANDER'S JAW...

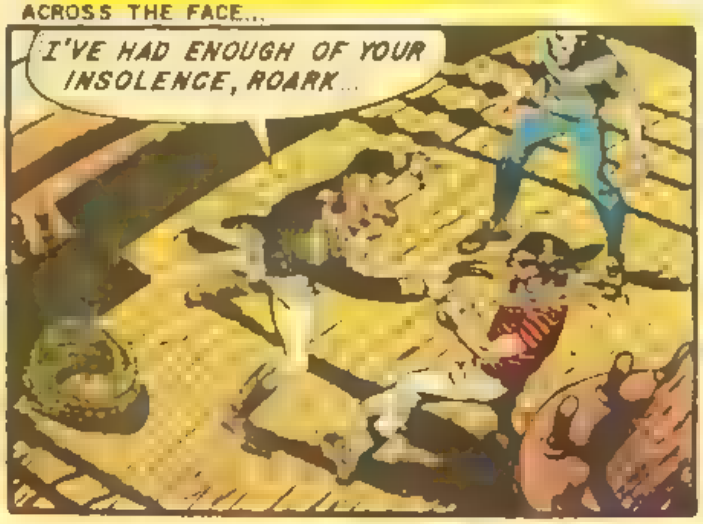
... AND WHEN THE RED FILM OF RAGE HAD CLEARED FROM THE ANGRY SEAMAN'S EYES, HE SAW HIS CAPTAIN SPRAWLED UPON THE DECK, SNARLING UP AT HIM WITH FURY AND HATE...

ROARK PROTESTED

THE CREW OF THE *SEA GULL* SCURRIED DOWN FROM THE RIGGING AND POURED TOPSIDE FROM BELOW AT THE SOUND OF THE SHRILL BOS'N'S PIPE. THEY LISTENED TO THE CAPTAIN'S SENTENCE. THEN CAME AN OMINOUS GROWLING, BUT THE MEN STOOD FAST IN THE FACE OF THE OFFICERS' GUNS.



THE CAPTAIN SWUNG OUT SAVAGELY WITH THE CAT-O'-NINE TAILS HE HELD IN HIS HAND, STINGING ROARK ACROSS THE FACE...

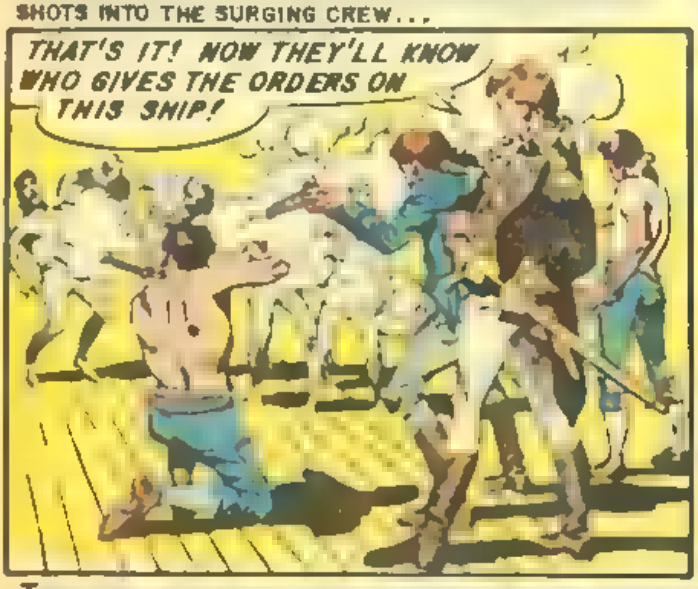


BUT AS THE CAPTAIN RAISED THE WHIP TO STRIKE AGAIN, ROARK SNATCHED IT FROM HIS HAND...

... AND BEFORE THE *SEA GULL'S* ASTONISHED OFFICERS COULD STOP HIM, SEAMAN ROARK LASHED THE CAT-O'-NINE ACROSS THE CAPTAIN'S OWN SURPRISED FACE...

THEN THE ANGRY SEAMAN SPUN AROUND, SHOUTING AT THE CREW WHILE THE OFFICERS HESITATED, UNCERTAIN AS TO WHAT TO DO...

IN ANSWER TO CAPTAIN DRUMMOND'S SHRIEKING COMMAND, THE NERVOUS OFFICERS POURED A VOLLEY OF SHOTS INTO THE SURGING CREW...

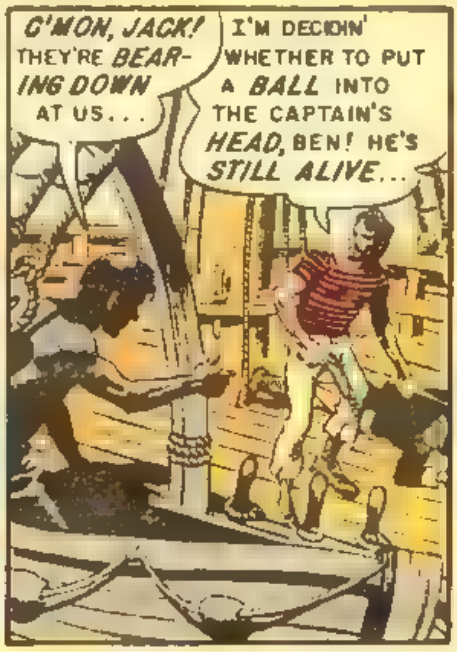


THREE MEN FELL DEAD, RIFLE BALLS IN THEIR FLESH. A WAVE OF ANGRY FURY SWEPT OVER THE SEAMEN. NOW THEY CHARGED THEIR OFFICERS, FEARFUL OF ANOTHER VOLLEY IF THEY COULD RELOAD...

THE AURA OF TENSION THAT HAD HUNG OVER THE SEA GULL HAD NOW BECOME A RAGING VIOLENCE AS DIRKS, FLASHED FROM BELTS, PLUNGED INTO SOFT BODIES... BELAYING PINS, WRENCHED FROM THE GUNWALES, CRUSHED SKULLS, AND RIFLES, RAISED POINT BLANK, BLASTED SKIN AND BONE...

SUDDENLY, BEN DREW JACK ROARK ASIDE...

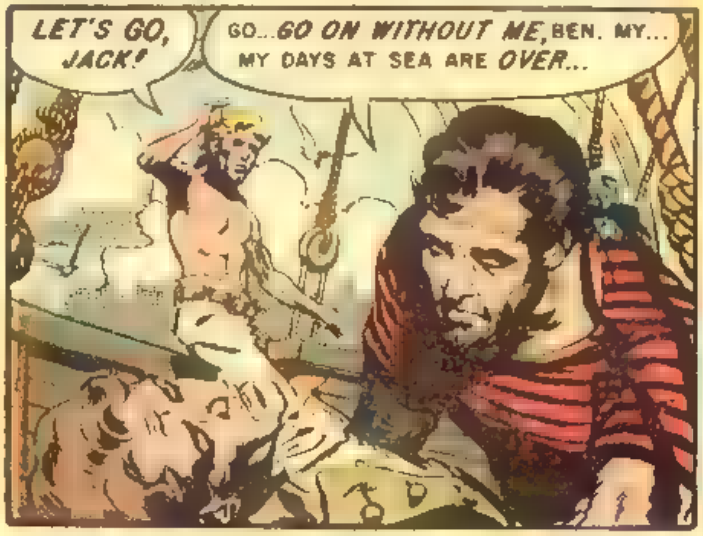
JACK PASSED THE WORD AND THE CREWMEN LEFT ALIVE CLIMBED INTO THE LONGBOAT...



CAPTAIN DRUMMOND CHARGED AT JACK ROARK WITH A SWORD HE'D TAKEN FROM A FALLEN OFFICER.

THE SEAMAN COOLY PARRIED THE CAPTAIN'S THRUST AND DROVE HIS OWN BLADE THROUGH HIS ENEMY'S HEART...

THE CAPTAIN SLIPPED TO THE DECK, MORTALLY WOUNDED. AS HE DIED, THE SEAMAN SQUINTED, THEN KNELT DOWN BESIDE HIM...



THERE WAS A QUIVER IN JACK ROARK'S VOICE AS HE TORE AWAY THE CAPTAIN'S BLOOD-SMEARED BLOUSE AND LIFTED THE HALF-CROWN THAT HUNG BY A CHAIN THERE TO THE HALF-CROWN THAT HUNG BY THE CHAIN AROUND HIS OWN NECK. THE TWO HALVES FIT PERFECTLY.

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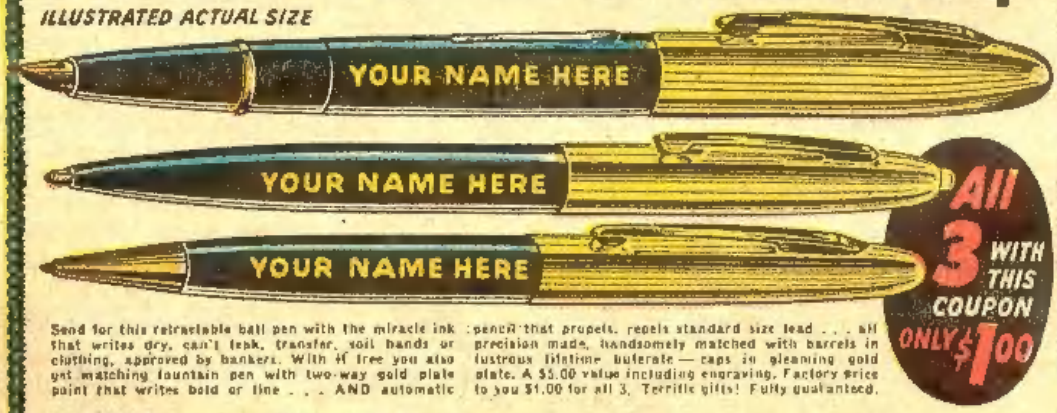

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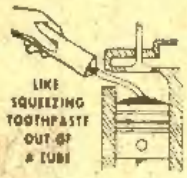

Before you spend $50.00 to $150.00 for an engine overhaul, read how you can fix that leaky engine yourself, in just a few minutes, without buying a single new part, without even taking your engine down. It's almost as easy as squeezing toothpaste or shaving cream out of a tube, thanks to the discovery of a new miracle substance called Power Seal. This revolutionary, new compound combines the *lubricating* qualities of Moly, the "greasy" wonder metal, with the leak-sealing properties of Vermiculite, the mineral product whose particles *expand* under heat. (Up to 30 times original size.)

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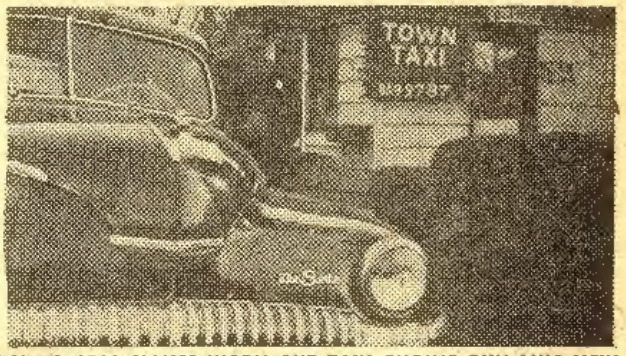

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I WILL TRAIN YOU AT HOME FOR GOOD PAY JOBS IN RADIO-TELEVISION

J. E. SMITH has trained more men for Radio-Television than any other man. OUR 40th YEAR.

America's Fast Growing Industry Offers You Good Pay—Bright Future—Security

I TRAINED THESE MEN

"Started to repair sets six months after enrolling. Earned $12 to $15 a week in spare time."—Adam Kramlik, Jr., Sunneytown, Pennsylvania.

"Up to our necks in Radio-Television work. Four other NRI men work here. Am happy with my work."—Glen Peterson, Bradford, Ont., Canada.

"Am doing Radio and Television Servicing full time. Now have my own shop. I owe my success to N.R.I."—Curtis Stath, Ft. Madison, Iowa.

"Am with WCOC. NRI course can't be beat. No trouble passing 1st class Radio-phone license exam."—Jesse W. Parker, Meridian, Mississippi.

"By graduation, had paid for course, car, testing equipment. Can service toughest jobs."—E. J. Streitenberger, New Boston, Ohio.

Training plus opportunity is the PERFECT COMBINATION for job security, good pay, advancement. In good times, the trained man makes the BETTER PAY, GETS PROMOTED. When jobs are scarce, the trained man enjoys GREATER SECURITY. NRI training can help assure you more of the better things of life.

Start Soon to Make $10, $15 a Week Extra Fixing Sets

Keep your job while training. I start sending you special booklets that show you how to fix sets the day you enroll. Multitester built with parts I send helps you make $10, $15 a week extra fixing sets while training. Many start their own Radio-Television business with spare time earnings.

My Training Is Up-To-Date

You benefit by my 40 years' experience training men at home. Well illustrated lessons give you basic principles you need. Skillfully developed kits of parts I send (see below) "bring to life" things you learn from lessons.

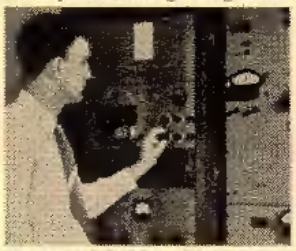
AVAILABLE TO **VETERANS** UNDER G.I. BILLS

You Learn by Practicing with Parts I Send

Nothing takes the place of PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. That's why NRI training is based on LEARNING BY DOING. You use parts I furnish to build many circuits common to Radio and Television. As part of my Communications Course, you build many things, including low power transmitter shown at left. You put it "on the air," perform procedures required of broadcasting operators. With my Servicing Course you build modern Radio, etc. Use Multitester you build to make money fixing sets. Many students make $10, $15 week extra fixing neighbors' sets in spare time while training. Coupon below will bring book showing other equipment you build. It's all yours to keep.

The Tested Way To Better Pay!

Television Making Good Jobs, Prosperity—Even without Television, Radio is bigger than ever. 115 million home and auto Radios to be serviced. Over 3000 Radio broadcasting stations use operators, technicians, engineers. Government, Aviation, Police, Ship, Micro-wave Relay, Two-Way Radio Communications for buses, taxis, trucks, etc., are important and growing fields. Television is moving ahead fast.



About 200 Television stations are now on the air. Hundreds of others being built. Good TV jobs opening up for Technicians, Operators, etc.

25 million homes now have Television sets. Thousands more are being sold every week. Get a job or have your own business selling, installing, servicing.

Radio-TV Needs Men of Action—Mail Coupon

Act now to get more of the good things of life. Actual lesson proves my training is practical, thorough. 64-page book shows good job opportunities for you in many fields. Take NRI training for as little as $5 a month. Many graduates make more than total cost of training in two weeks. Mail coupon now. J. E. SMITH, President, National Radio Institute, Dept. **4MOI** Washington 9, D. C. OUR 40TH YEAR.

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